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Contributors

Marlene A. Briggs is assistant professor of English at the University of British Columbia. She has published essays on Virginia Woolf, D. H. Lawrence, and First World War photography. Her book in progress explores the protracted aftermath of the 1914–18 conflict in twentieth-century British literature. stringsm@interchange.ubc.ca

Tom Henthorne is associate professor of English and women's and gender studies at Pace University. His book on Joseph Conrad, *Trojan Horses: Imperialism, Hybridity, and the Postcolonial Aesthetic,* is coming out this year. He is currently completing a study of political novels in Great Britain during World War II. <thenthorne@gmail.com>

Jeffrey Mathes McCarthy is associate professor of English and chair of environmental studies at Westminster College. His current work considers high modernism through the lens of environmental criticism. His new book is Contact: Mountain Climbing and Environmental Thinking. <jmccarthy@westminstercollege.edu>

Peter Nohrnberg is assistant professor in the English department at Harvard. He is currently working on a manuscript tentatively titled "Vulgate Textualities: Joyce, Newspapers, and Modernism."

Siobhan Phillips teaches at Yale and Wesleyan. She is working on a book about everyday time in twentieth-century American poetry. <siobhan. phillips@yale.edu>

Michael L. Ross is emeritus professor in the department of English and cultural studies at McMaster University. He has published two books, Storied Cities: Literary Imaginings of Florence, Venice, and Rome and Race Riots: Comedy and Ethnicity in Modern British Fiction, along with articles on various subjects in nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature. He is currently working on a study of the relation between literature and advertising. <rossm@cogeco.ca>

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Contributors

Frances Dickey is assistant professor at the University of Missouri. She has published on Whitman, Frost, Eliot, and Bishop; her essay "Parrot's Eye: A Portrait by Manet and Two by T. S. Eliot" received the Kappell Prize from *Twentieth-Century Literature* in 2006. She is writing a book on portraiture in modern American poetry. <dickeyf@missouri.edu>

Terence Diggory is professor of English at Skidmore College. His Encyclopedia of the New York School Poets is scheduled for publication in 2009. With Stephen Paul Miller, he is coeditor of The Scene of My Selves: New Work on New York School Poets. \$\text{cdiggory@skidmore.edu}\$\$

Ambreen Hai is associate professor of English language and literature at Smith College, where she teaches literature of empire, anglophone postcolonial literature, contemporary literary theory, and study of women and gender. Her forthcoming book, Making Words Matter: The Agency of Colonial and Postcolonial Literature, examines how concerns about literary agency are articulated through the human body in the work of Kipling, Forster, and Rushdie. <a href="mailto: analterature associate professor of English language and literature at Smith and Study of English language and literature at Smith and Study of English language and literature at Smith and Study of English language and literature at Smith anglophone postcolonial literature, contemporary literary theory, and study of women and gender. Her forthcoming book, Making Words Matter: The Agency of Colonial and Postcolonial Literature, examines how concerns about literary agency are articulated through the human body in the work of Kipling, Forster, and Rushdie. analterature, examines how concerns about literary agency are articulated through the human body in the

David Sherman is assistant professor of English and American Literature at Brandeis University. His recent publications include essays on the narrative ethics of Woolf and Faulkner. He is currently writing In a Strange Room: Corpses, Sovereign Power, and the Modernist Imagination, a book on representations of corpses in Anglo-American modernism. <davidsherman@brandeis.edu>

Kim Shirkhani is a lecturer in the English department at Yale and a doctoral candidate at the University of Virginia. Her dissertation examines English particularism and questions of nation, class, and classification in novels by E. M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, and Jean Rhys. kim.shirkhani@yale.edu

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Contributors

Thomas F. Haddox is associate professor of English at the University of Tennessee (Knoxville), specializing in Southern literature. He is the author of Fears and Fascinations: Representing Catholicism in the American South and numerous articles on Southern and American literature. American Southern and American literature.

Suzette Henke is Thruston B. Morton Sr. Professor of English at the University of Louisville. She is author of James Joyce and the Politics of Desire and Shattered Subjects: Trauma and Testimony in Women's Life-Writing. She recently coedited, with David Eberly, a collection of essays on Virginia Woolf and trauma. She has published widely in the field of modern British and American literature and is currently working on a study titled Cartographies of Trauma: Gender and Abjection in Woolf, Joyce, and Lawrence. <suzette.henke@louisville.edu>

Amelia Klein is currently at Harvard completing her dissertation "Romantic Lyric and the Makings of the World." Her poetry and criticism have appeared in various journals including Colorado Review, Denver Quarterly, and Boston Review. <amklein@fas.harvard.edu>

Neil ten Kortenaar is associate professor of English at the University of Toronto at Scarborough. He is the author of Self, Nation, Text in Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children.

Karl Kroeber, Mellon Professor in the Humanities at Columbia University and emeritus editor of *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, has published many essays and books on both contemporary and traditional American Indian literature, his most recent volume being *Native American Storytelling*. <kk17@columbia.edu>

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Contributors

Claire Bowen is the G. J. Lieberman Fellow in the department of English at Stanford University. She is completing a dissertation on mid—twentieth-century Anglo American culture, "The Still Point: Poetry and Fiction, 1945–1955."

Luke Carson is associate professor at the University of Victoria, British Columbia. He is the author of Consumption and Depression in Gertrude Stein, Louis Zukofsky, and Ezra Pound and has published articles on John Ashbery, Elizabeth Bishop, Marianne Moore, and James Merrill, among others. <a href="mailto:ca>

Robert Chodat is assistant professor of English at Boston University, where he specializes in contemporary American fiction, literary theory, and the relation between literature and philosophy. He is the author of Worldly Acts and Sentient Things: The Persistence of Agency from Stein to DeLillo. His current project examines the relation between postwar American fiction, American pragmatism, and contemporary philosophy of mind. <rchodat@bu.edu>

Debra Rae Cohen is assistant professor of English at the University of South Carolina. She is the author of Remapping the Home Front: Locating Citizenship in British Women's Great War Fiction and coeditor of the forthcoming collection Broadcasting Modernism. Her current project centers on Rebecca West as a limit case for modernist historiography. <dro@sc.edu>

Rodney Stenning Edgecombe lectures English literature at the University of Cape Town. He took his PhD at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he was awarded the Members' English Prize, 1978–1979. His most recent book is on Thomas Hood, and he has published many articles on topics that range from Shakespeare to nineteenth-century ballet and opera. <sten@iafrica.com>



Siobhan Phillips

No twentieth-century poet attended more to daily routine than did Wallace Stevens. From a 1927 letter that outlines his schedule (Collected 941) to a 1955 message in which he describes "trying to pick up old habits," from the "Exchequering" (34) quotidian of "The Comedian as the Letter C" to the recurrent daily syllables of "The World as Meditation" (442), ordinary patterns are vital to both his life and his art. Stevens sometimes struggled with diurnal repetition and sometimes tried to escape it, but he never took such regularity for granted; in his writing and living, he would redeem rather than evade quotidian necessity. Through this effort he realizes a vital philosophical possibility: his ordinary rounds provide a response to dualism that resists idealist and empiricist extremes.

To recognize this response in Stevens's humdrum routines is to extend recent critical recognition of the poet's sense of the ordinary. Such attention is salutary, but only specific analysis of repetition demonstrates why the "normal" (Stevens, Letters 767) or the "commonplace" (643) should be so important to this poet. A focus on everyday repetition, moreover, helps to suggest why the "mode" (Collected 403) of the ordinary should be central not only to Stevens's work but also to twentieth-century literature in general.³ As Stevens's diurnal rhythms inscribe a practicable interdependence of imaginative freedom and realistic fact, they demonstrate how an enduring experiential order can fill a modernist epistemological need.4 In so doing, the poet evinces a modern citizen's vision of the common as well as a modern artist's choice of the commonplace; his use of the quotidian allows a seemingly esoteric craft to join, elucidate, and celebrate democratic life. Beginning with "The Man with the Blue Guitar" and culminating in "The Auroras of Autumn," Stevens's everyday poetics would show his fellow citizens the creative possibility in basic patterns.

Such patterns are hardly a novel subject for Stevens criticism, and many readers have noted the poet's literary focus on environmental cyclicity, including the recurrence of days and seasons.⁵ Like his workday routine, his poetic rounds bespeak a basic conviction that human life and work exist in continuous relation with worldly process.⁶ This relation could seem to endorse Stevens's pragmatist affinities: to exemplify John Dewey's contentions in Art as Experience, for example, that imaginative work continues "normal processes of living" (10) and joins the "basic rhythms" (151) of one's environment. Equating experience and poetry, however, the environment and the poem, underestimates Stevens's ordinary art: while Dewey's pragmatist aesthetics, like his pragmatist philosophy in general, manifests little concern with individual creativity, Stevens's experiential artistry reinforces subjective power.7 Pragmatist literary criticism wonders whether "there is something tantalizingly oxymoronic in the phrase 'pragmatist imagination'" (Levin 195) and considers how identity can emerge through rather than against "the contexts that mediate and shape" it (176), but Stevens's daily habits solve the problem of this paradoxical emergence, thereby detailing the "poetics of transition" that both Jonathan Levin and Richard Poirier describe.8 Stevens's version of poetic pragmatism suggests how an ostensibly empiricist acceptance of process can allow an ostensibly idealist achievement of subjectivity.

The need for both is apparent from Stevens's earliest treatment of daily repetition, which fears that ordinary rhythms would erase individuality. For "The Man Whose Pharynx Was Bad," trapped in the "malady of the quotidian" (Collected 81), only a stop to the world's returns would allow his individual "orations." The poem knows, though, that "time will not relent." "The Comedian as the Letter C," the first version of which appeared the same year as the first version of "The Man Whose Pharynx Was Bad," therefore tries to accept daily necessity, testing whether a poet can evacuate egotism and imagination in favor of self-effacement and acquiescence. James Longenbach, the best critic of Stevens's ordinary habits, would see the resulting amenability as an attainment of Stevens's prized "ordinary world," the place where "Stevens wrote all his best poems" (93).9 It seems, however, more like a first, failed version of that realm, as the comedian's quotidian denies poetry altogether; his everyday course must choose between the mind's "flights" (Stevens, Collected 31) and reality's facts. Stevens more successfully realizes the promise of the ordinary in "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," when the speaker can do "all that

angels can" and also remain "like men" (350): desire for an unrecurrent "final slate" (81) from "The Man Whose Pharynx Was Bad" yields here to an appreciation of "going round" (350) as a "final good," and "Grotesque apprenticeship to chance event" (32) from "The Comedian as the Letter C" becomes a "master[y]" of "repetition" (350). Stevens's daily recurrence, his conscious human mimicry of a diurnally rotating globe, masters a rhythmic interdependence of mind and world.

Stevens's search for the "inaccessible jewel" of the "normal," therefore, is a "difficult pursuit" (Letters 521) rather than an easy assumption, as it inscribes a quest for the most central and problematic relation in his poetry. That relation is also the most central and problematic relation in criticism of his poetry, and various readings of Stevens have suggested virtually every possible account of the mind-world dichotomy. 10 None, though, has fully articulated how the "habitual, customary" (767) mode that was to Stevens "a large part of the normality of the normal" can obviate the realistic submission of the comedian as well as the romantic rebellion of the man whose pharynx was bad. In "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction" and "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven" Stevens explores the means: the repetition of daily time combines renewal and replication, beginnings and returns, so that each new morning offers both a fresh conception to create and a known standard to expect. One might repeatedly invent, but invent what will be; repeatedly imagine, but imagine what will truly appear.

Mornings and evenings might be promises, that is, and "promises kept" (403), to use the phrasing of "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven." Extending the ordinary world on which "Notes" concludes, this later poem provides the fullest explication of the recurrent temporality that to Stevens makes up the quotidian: a round of "blue day" (400) and "branchings after day," a calendric cycle of "feasts and the habits of saints" (402), a fluent alternation in which "sun is half the world" (411) and dark "is the other half." As Christopher Miller notes (200), this poem is governed by Stevens's "figure like Ecclesiast" (Collected 409), whose chant finds a "sense in the changing sense // Of things"; no less than the biblical text, Stevens's ordinary scripture focuses on the same-but-different repetition endemic to everyday time. 11 The pattern, Stevens writes, offers a "permanence composed of impermanence,"

So that the approaching sun and its arrival, Its evening feast and the following festival,

This faithfulness of reality, this mode,
This tendance and venerable holding-in
Make gay the hallucinations in surfaces. (403)

The faithfulness of diurnal time renders "hallucinations" and actual "surfaces" inseparable; every nocturnal "phrase" of the "spirit" (403), as the next canto specifies, can turn to a sunlit "fact." Through "propounding" (404) of natural cycles, subjective "making in the mind" (403) is objective truth.¹²

The process is not absolute, Stevens knows. Earthly changes do not proceed with the monotonous exactitude of lunar cycles, just as earthly repetition, in "Notes," remains "eccentric" (350) rather than strictly measured. Stevens's quotidian provides the poet's favorite paradox of consistent innovation or dependable novelty; its pattern is not the relentless dailiness of "The Man Whose Pharynx Was Bad," then, but the ceaseless nightand-day renewal of "The Well Dressed Man with a Beard" (224). 13 And if in "Notes" the "first idea" is an "immaculate beginning" (330), in "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven" "original earliness . . . is a daily sense" (410). One might use that sense of originality every day, "re-creat[ing]" what is "possible" (411); daily time provides a repeated chance for the "new orations" (81) that "The Man Whose Pharynx Was Bad" covets and for the "original relation" (Emerson 7) that American romanticism has sought since Emerson. As they realize "Conceptions of new mornings of new worlds," in the phrase of "An Ordinary Evening" (401), these diurnal returns do not enervate creativity but demand and endorse it. Each sunrise marks a reliable revelation as "that which was incredible becomes / In misted contours, credible day again."

That "again"—that faithful "tendance" (403)—is vital. Only an order in which "old stars are planets of morning" (301), as in "Description Without Place," a rotation in which the known past enables the unknown future, allows the incredible to become the credible, imagination to become fact, "brilliantest descriptions of new day, / Before it comes" to be a "just anticipation." As Stevens writes in "Evening Without Angels," describing an "accord of repetitions," this order means that "desire for day" will be "Accomplished in the immensely flashing East (111)." Repetitive poetics therefore avoids what "Notes" describes as a nocturnal pseudomajesty, a solipsistic imagination that is no more than "Cinderella fulfilling herself" (350). If fiction expects the morning to come, the stroke

of midnight will not dispel one's poems as fairy-tale delusions; rather, the new day will confirm them as fact. This is the poetic abstraction that the first section of "Notes" would enact, a "calendar hymn" (330) in which the "hoobla-how" (331) of night makes a "strange relation" with the "hoobla-hoo" of day. It is the change that the second part of "Notes" would find, a repetition that is not the monotonous drone of the same but the interdependence of "day on night, the imagined // On the real" (339). It is, finally, the pleasure that the last section of "Notes" achieves: even in a world that is "not ourselves" (332) the "freshness" (344) of worldly transformation can be "the freshness of ourselves." "Time will write them down," Stevens says of these refreshments; in the timely "round" (350) of natural repetitions, a poet can make reality his own.

This discovery aligns Stevens with some of his philosophical predecessors, thinkers who also accepted a post-Kantian and post-theological setting while still seeking both certainty and freedom. George Santayana's "animal faith," for instance, "posits existence where existence is" (104), and William James defines our "accord" with reality as "the one strictly underived and original contribution which we make to the world" (579); in daily recurrence Stevens makes a modernist practice of Santayana's positings and manifests both the effort and the accomplishment of James's accord. If the poet knew as early as "Sunday Morning" that humanity's "unsponsored, free" existence nonetheless resides in an "old dependency of day and night" (56), his later verse builds from that dependence all that a sponsorless, skeptical Sunday seems to lack.

Stevens's poetry, therefore, also anticipates Stanley Cavell's thought, which finds a solution to skepticism in an "attainment of the everyday" (New 77) and a "willing repetition of days" (Quest 178). 14 Cavell's philosophy helps to explain why language should be central to this repetition; his development of ordinary language philosophy discovers that ordinary, iterable words provide the same access to an unknowable reality as do ordinary, iterable days. 15 The experience of Stevens's actual world is thus a "vulgate of experience" (Collected 397), a "lingua franca" (343) that would "compound the imagination's Latin"; with its concluding description of an earthly "Fat girl" (351), "Notes" demonstrates that everyday repetition allows one to name and rename reality. 16 For Stevens, to remake language that has been used before, to find the novel resonance in familiar signification, is to wield "proper" (349) speech; as the etymological play of "proper" itself suggests, the resulting words can be both appropriate to

the world and appropriated by the mind. ¹⁷ Such confidence links Stevens to contemporaries like Jean Paulhan, moreover, as well as to later thinkers like Cavell: in *The Flowers of Tarbes*, Paulhan, whose work Stevens knew well, argues that a reassertion of rhetoric can overcome the "terror" (79)¹⁸ of dualistic skepticism with a conscious adoption of the familiar and precedented. ¹⁹ Like Stevens, Paulhan emphasizes repeated "rediscover[y]," within standard forms, of "the original joy of the first commitment, when our spirit accepted having a body" (93). The "nobility" that he finds in this recurrent originality endorses the "mastery" that Stevens knows in his faithful rebeginnings. For both writers, accepting repetition allows necessity to empower subjective freedom and distinct subjectivity to know necessary truth: in his approach to everyday time, Stevens joins this twentieth-century philosophical project.

We should not be surprised, therefore, that Stevens wished to "write of the normal in a normal way" (Letters 287) or advised a friend to "keep on going round and round in the same old way" (Huntington WAS 3483, 18 Nov. 1940) or held so fast to his own routine way of life. Indeed, Stevens's rounds allow us to amend the long debate about whether he is a poet of idealist abstractions or realistic fact; his quotidian repetitions describe a world of repeated interdependence between the imagined and the actual. Recurrence reveals how the commonplace can be "a middle ground," in Longenbach's words, "that was not a compromise between extremes" (viii). Emphasizing recurrence thus counters a critical tendency to read Stevens's attention to the commonplace as an aversion to the imagination. The result often supports the antisubjectivist version of the poet that is now dominant: even Longenbach, for example, describes the ordinary as less a middle ground than a locus for Stevens's "carefully modulated effort to assert the historicity of poetry and the political power of poets" (279), and Filreis equates Stevens's interest in routine with his interest in "historical conditions" (Actual xviii); Liesl Olson opposes Stevens's interest in the ordinary with his possible investment in "imaginative vision" ("Ordinary" 159).20 Such readings overlook the fact that Stevens's quotidian world could be timely but not political and creative but not ethereal: what "An Ordinary Evening" calls a "total double-thing" (Collected 402) of both subjectivity and empiricism. Only by describing this everyday realm accurately can we understand why the quotidian should be so vital an end, and so unifying a means, for Stevens's art and life.

Only by such description, moreover, can we understand Stevens's

naturalism, so often slighted.²¹ Naturalism distinguishes my analysis of Stevens's everyday poetics from critical accounts that note his vacillations "up and down between imagination and reality" (Richardson, Early 241): the movement between these two, in Stevens's view, is not a psychological variable but an environmental fact.²² A recurrence of real and unreal constitutes one's real setting; the physical globe is that "gay tournamonde" (406) sought by the professor in "An Ordinary Evening," that "world in which things revolve" (Huntington WAS 3305, 27 Jan. 1950) as Stevens specifies in a letter about his neologism. The line that follows this term in Stevens's poem, "In which he is and as and is are one," enacts tournamonde revolutions with its smooth shifts of vowel. It also shows the possibilities of such shifts: a movement between "is and as," actual and imagined, as steadily recurrent as the rotations of the earth. Stevens values a "physical world," as "Esthétique du Mal" explains, where "desire" will never become "despair" (286), and a repetitive physical world allows such assurance. 23

Stevens knows that he shares this world with all of his fellow humans; a quotidian order joins his poems and his days to the general day-and-night pattern of earthly existence. His ordinary poetics therefore grounds his first-person plural—the "we" (350) that emerges through the repetitions in "Notes," for example.²⁴ The pronoun points to another Deweyan vision, the dream of a social realm that can nurture rather than suppress individualism. Stevens's engagement with that philosophical goal, however, again relies on a poetic method: on his employment of a repetitive order that can unite humdrum life and artistic creativity.



Stevens discovers this crucial unity through and with his discovery of a public voice, for it is in an early passage of confident first-person plural, the conclusion of "The Man with the Blue Guitar," that the poet of "The Comedian" becomes the poet of "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction." This 1936 work would speak to a "generation" (150), the same generation that tells him, "Do not speak to us of the greatness of poetry" (136). He speaks instead of the commonness of poetry—and the poetry in common life. The final canto confronts the threat and finds the pleasure in that ordinary existence, beginning with the everyday workweek:

That generation's dream, aviled In the mud, in Monday's dirty light,

That's it, the only dream they knew, Time in its final block, not time

To come, a wrangling of two dreams. Here is the bread of time to come,

Here is its actual stone. The bread Will be our bread, the stone will be

Our bed and we shall sleep by night. We shall forget by day, except

The moments when we choose to play

The imagined pine, the imagined jay. (150–51)

As this canto demonstrates, Stevens's public address relies on the most seemingly private of activities: dreaming. Here the difference between a quotidian of avilement and a quotidian of contentment is the distinction between two different kinds of dreams. The first is a single conception, the dreamer imagining only an absolute "Time in its final block" and thus seeing only degradation in the "dirty light" of an everyday pattern. The second is a binary wrangling that constitutes a continuous "time to come" and seems to inhabit an everyday pattern. The "two dreams" of this second sort of time, that is, could be compared to the two dreams of "Hymn from a Watermelon Pavilion," which names them as "night and day" (71); and the "stone" of its practice revises an earlier section of "The Man with the Blue Guitar," where "The earth is not earth but a stone" (142). When Stevens advocates this second time, "time to come," in the final four stanzas, he presents an everyday order of slumber and waking that takes its rhythms from earthly repetitions. If his generation lives and dreams by this daily bread, the muddy light of actuality will not "avile" the illusions of darkness. Rather, reality will repeat one's dreams; one can, as in the last stanza, see daytime facts as one's own nighttime creations.

Such a transformation would achieve what "The Blue Guitar" seeks: a "dream no longer a dream, a thing, / Of things as they are" (143). It turns

Stevens's desire for an accord between poetry and truth into his recognition of an interrelation between night and day. Indeed, Stevens's work rewrites incessantly and explicitly the traditional equation of poetry or imagination with other nightwork: when Crispin denies himself imagination, to take one of many instances, he expunges "dreams" (32). Criticism has neglected this conflation, or perhaps considered it too obvious to mention, 25 but it is basic to Stevens's quotidian poetics: by rendering dreams part of an ordinary mode, Stevens naturalizes and democratizes creative power. In so doing, he rewrites the romanticism of an early model, Keats, who compares sleep and poetry almost as frequently as Stevens does and whose moon-governed "Endymion" was a particular favorite of Stevens. Like that work, Stevens's early poems and journal entries worry over the division between the night's illusion and the day's reality.²⁶ By the time of "The Man with the Blue Guitar," however, Stevens arrives at a conception of the imagination much like the one Keats evolved: Keats describes how Adam found his dream to be true at the moment of waking (Keats, Letters 36), and Stevens describes dream becoming fact just "as daylight comes" (Collected 143).27 In his everyday poetics, however, the transformation is not Keats's divine revelation but the simple naturalism of night turning to morning. Therefore, one need not be an Adamic believer or even an Adamic artist to know imagination made real; one need only be an ordinary human being, living in and by a pattern of sleep and rising. This is the broad polity claimed in the final "we" (151) of "The Man with the Blue Guitar"; in ordinary time, Stevens tells his fellows, all human beings may be accomplished dreamers.

This accomplishment supplants both religious and political fulfillment. We can see Stevens's displacement of the first through his response to another modern version of Keats's dream theory: Freud's work also begins with an illusory power basic to the human psyche. His description of the wishful dreaming in ordinary sleep may be likened to Stevens's description of the desirous dreaming that is ordinary poetry, and in both Freud's psychoanalysis and Steven's poetics this common process extends artistic agency to all human beings. Stevens himself repels any direct association: in a 1934 survey, for example, he dismissed psychoanalytic influence, adding that he had "not read Freud except the Interpretation" (Collected 771). To make exception for the Interpretation of Dreams is certainly to qualify the dismissal, and in a lecture less than two years later, at about the time he was writing "The Man with the Blue Guitar," Stevens

wrote that Freud's work had "given the irrational a legitimacy that it never had before (783)."²⁹ But Stevens wished to defend that legitimacy against Freud's own distrust of dreaming. He does so most explicitly through confrontations with *The Future of an Illusion*, where Freud critiques the mass-scale wish fulfillment of religious faith; Stevens argues that an abandonment of religion, and a resulting "education" or "surrender" to "reality" (651), need not be a surrender of illusion altogether. Human dreams can be something other than the delusive yearning for heaven that Freud describes, Stevens argues in "Imagination as Value"; illusions might be a verified desire for what this world grants. In a "science of illusions" (728), Stevens explains, "deliberate fictions" could accord with that "true work of art" that is one's "time and . . . place."

This is the ordinary dreamwork that Stevens would describe in "An Ordinary Evening," written just after this lecture. In this poem the "search for God" yields to a "search / For reality" that is also the "daily" (410) search of the recurrent quotidian. Stevens first suggests this substitution in "The Man with the Blue Guitar" 12 years earlier, with the poem's concluding address to a generation. This audience seeks, in its request to the poet, something "to take the place / Of empty heaven and its hymns" (137), and Stevens in his final canto responds: Sunday's eternal sacrament is replaced with Monday's daily bread, the mark of a Christian covenant with the "actual stone" (151) of the earth, 31 and the single conclusion of eternity—"Time in its final block" (150)—with the continuing wrangle of a routine "time to come" (151). Such substitutions, Stevens assures his fellow citizens, grant a continuing power to dream—a power that their distrust of religious illusion has stifled: in canto 5 they are without any illusions at all, on a "flat and bare" (136) earth where "night is sleep" and their sun is shadowless. In this they prefigure those "Plain men in plain towns" from "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven," men who have "fought / Against illusion"—have read Freud's Future of an Illusion, perhaps—and fall asleep at night merely "snuffed out" (399). If those citizens find "appeasement" for such a state in the "savage and subtle and simple harmony" of their indigenous situation, a "matching and mating of surprised accords" that is manifest in temporal cycles, the men of "Blue Guitar" find succor in a similarly indigenous music, and in another "nuptial song" (148) of harmony. Stevens's instrument, by the final canto, takes up the earthly rhythm of day and night, supplanting the hymns of

heaven with the song of "things as they are." He thus turns a future of aviled illusions into a future of everyday dreaming.

This "time to come" replaces a political heaven as well as a religious one, supplanting the communist program that seems, at times, to be an even more dangerous rival for Stevens's poetry than the Christian church. Indeed, in "Imagination as Value," Stevens writes that "communism exhibits imagination on its most momentous scale" (730) and "promises a practicable earthly paradise" (731): communism, it seems, does all that his verse would. This possibility would have been even more present to Stevens's mind at the time of "The Man with the Blue Guitar," when he had just written "Owl's Clover," a long meditation on the role of art in society (152-70). Critics disagree about the relation between this earlier work and "The Man with the Blue Guitar." Many see the latter as a welcome triumph for the Stevensian imagination, after the ambivalent social conscience in "Owl's Clover," while others emphasize the poetic value of "Owl's Clover" and the continuing topicality of "The Man with the Blue Guitar."32 It is not just politics that link the two, however, but dailiness: the transition from one work to the other signals Stevens's deeper allegiance to ordinary time. Indeed, it was communism's engagement with time that spurred Stevens's engagement with communism; he regarded this "great force in politics and in life" (Letters 486) with an unexpected respect in part because its emphasis on futurity challenged the sense of expectation central to his own work. 33 Communism offers a "new romanticism" (351), in Stevens's words, by manifesting that anticipatory desire vital to Stevens's prologues and preludes; when "Owl's Clover," ostensibly mouthing a communist position, asserts that "Everything is dead / Except the future" (154), it could be speaking a central claim of Stevens's verse.34

The poem finds, however, that this communist future is not quite the poet's. Communism builds "what ought to be" (154) rather than what could be or will be, and desires what should be possible rather than what is. Its envisioned tomorrow is terminal, a "Statue at the World's End" or a utopia when time will cease. The last canto of "The Man with the Blue Guitar" shows that the single dream of communism, no less than the single dream of Christianity, can make of ordinary life a single frustrated hope: the quotidian malady of a long "avil[ement]" (150) that waits for time to cease. Stevens turns from the statuary of "Owl's Clover," then, an art as static as any "final block," to the music of "The Blue Guitar," an art not only accommodating but also depending on temporal process. The

desire it plays is not "final" but continuous; the dream it dreams is not "only" but recurrently renewed. In place of a politically utopian paradise, a timeless state "without past / And without future" (170), this art posits an ordinary globe of repeated pasts and futures: "Things as they were, things as they are, // Things as they will be by and by" (146). "Here" (151), Stevens's lineation emphasizes in the concluding canto, here is the better life that political desire would enact, in the ordinary repetitive pattern that humans already inhabit. The final stanzas demonstrate the satisfaction it makes possible, through the pivotal breaks of "time // to come," "will be // Our bed," and "except // The moments" (150–51): a slightly unsure pause, before a comforting turn, suggests the expectation and fulfillment recurrently found in everyday life.

When Stevens writes in a letter, therefore, that he believes the better life communists desire is possible "within the present frame-work" (Letters 351), his statement may be speak more than the conservatism of a comfortable insurance executive. It might also bespeak an honest assessment of that framework's possibility. Trusting it could well seem hollow, and the choice to "play" (Collected 151) reality as one's own dream could easily seem like a willed self-delusion: the pretense that Stevens recommends in a late letter, perhaps, when he writes that while things "never go well ... you have to pretend that they do" (Letters 866). Yet he adds, in this letter, his belief that "good fortune can be worth it," an admission suggesting the rewards as well as the rigor of the process. To see the solar "fortuner" (Collected 34) of Crispin's quotidian as one's own imagined "good fortune" is to know a happiness more resilient than any promised by politics. One will find a "peace, a security, a sense of good fortune and of things that change only slowly," as Stevens writes in another correspondence, "so much more certain than a whole era of Communism could ever give" (Letters 609-10). Stevens has "no sympathy with communism, instead of expectation" (350), as he writes in 1940, because for him communism forbids the best expectation; the poet of "The Man with the Blue Guitar" would replace the unreliable teleology of political systems, as well as the illusory teleology of religious creeds, with the certain futurity available in common life.

He thus ends *The Man with the Blue Guitar*, the volume that includes both the title poem and "Owl's Clover," with "The Men That Are Falling," presenting a daily, earthly dream as both a political and a religious

satisfaction. Its hero is a socialist soldier as well as a religious believer, and yet he "loved earth, not heaven" (174); he desires his actual time and place rather than a Christian afterlife or political paradise. His yearning is therefore a "desire . . . beyond despair" (173); his dream can become "life's voluble utterance" (174), "syllables," Stevens writes, "That he spoke only by doing what he did." The challenge of the poem, and of Stevens's quotidian poetics, is to make one's own ordinary "doing" into this sort of art, this sort of religion, and this sort of politics: a daily desire for ordinary reality. What Stevens calls the "demnition grind" (*Letters* 766) of the quotidian will then allow what the hero finds in "The Men That Are Falling": "fulfilment of desire, / In the grinding ric-rac" (174).

9

This fulfillment means martyrdom, however; Stevens's dreamer "loved earth, not heaven, enough to die" (Collected 174). To replace a timeless future with an ordinary "time to come" (151) is to forgo the promise of eternal life for the certainty of eventual death. Stevens's everyday poetry does not ignore this implication, but it finds a different sort of eternality in his ordinary world and everyday dreaming. He does so most fully in "The Auroras of Autumn," with its brotherhood of sleepers accepting a fateful "tomorrow" (362); here a mastery of repetition masters even a mortal dawn (355–63).

The development marks Stevens's movement from *Transport to Summer* and "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction" to *The Auroras of Autumn* and its title poem. As the seasonal progress of the titles suggests, and as numerous readers have noted, the latter confronts the threat of age and death inherent in earthly change. In "Notes" these changes seem to promise an earthly eternality, through the ceaseless renewal of days and seasons, but "The Auroras of Autumn" doubts this endurance, for it admits the gap that the repetitions of "Notes" would heal: the divide between the world's "freshness" (344) and one's own. This gap is evinced in the questions of that fateful ninth canto:

Shall we be found hanging in the trees next spring? Of what disaster is this the imminence:
Bare limbs, bare trees and a wind as sharp as salt?

The stars are putting on their glittering belts.

They throw around their shoulders cloaks that flash
Like a great shadow's last embellishment. (362)

The world grows no older with each return; there is always another sunrise or spring. Humans, however, age with each repetition, and must expect, eventually, a final evening or autumn. The bare limbs of human life do not presage a vernal return when we shall be "hanging in the trees" with new fruit; they show the "imminence" of that mortal "disaster" that "hanging" also evokes. ³⁶ Our advancing barrenness presages a last, terminal "embellishment"—what "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven" calls a "total leaflessness" (407).

From his earliest work, Stevens knows this diminution to be inherent in human memory. In "Anglais Mort à Florence," for instance, a doomed protagonist with a "self returning mostly memory" recognizes that "A little less returned for him each spring" (119), and in the description of spring in "Notes" Stevens asks "why / Should there be a question of returning or / Of death in memory's dream?" (338). We remember today as a repetition of yesterday, thus registering temporal progress, while each of the world's unremembering iterations, by contrast, enacts a fresh "beginning" rather than a comparative "resuming." In "Notes" Stevens wonders if humans can experience this unending refreshment by eradicating recollection. He realizes, however, that such a solution has its difficulties: memory allows the "dream" as well as the death, the distinction of imaginative consciousness as well as the distinction of mortal termination. Recollection of past days, after all, allows the creation of days to come; in "Notes" it is "later reason" (346) that allows human beings to "make of what we see, what we see clearly / And have seen, a place dependent on ourselves." One effort of "Notes" is the struggle to maintain this power while resisting its fatal implications: the strain is evident in a contemporaneous lecture when Stevens mentions "the question of the relationship of the imagination and memory, which we avoid" (681).37

Stevens could not avoid this question long. "Esthétique du Mal," a few years later, explicitly considers the interrelation of imagination, memory, and death; and by the time of "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven," Stevens's ordinary returns can admit that divide between self and world that predicts mortality as well as permits creativity. Description of recurrence in this latter poem acknowledges the difference between human

time and the earth's mode: while the world's "oldest-newest day is the newest alone" (406), humanity hears "old age" (407) in the evening wind. But human time in "An Ordinary Evening" could also be like the world's: like Stevens's Omega, a lunar figure of imagination and memory, human life might be "refreshed at every end" (400). 38 To know this promise, humanity's "serious reflection" (408) must be "composed / Neither of comic nor tragic but of commonplace," as Stevens writes after reconsidering his "total leaflessness" (407): one must consider human death neither as the "clipped" (37) relation of the "Comedian" nor as the tragic doom of the "Anglais," but as one more iteration in the world's commonplace pattern. Thus "The Auroras of Autumn" follows the evening wind with the belief that whatever is imminent, however disastrous,

may come tomorrow in the simplest word, Almost as part of innocence, almost, Almost as the tenderest and truest part. (362)

Here any future, even death, is but a diurnal refreshment in the life of the world; this sunrise enlarges Stevens's ordinary mode beyond the limits of individual existence. It must enlarge Stevens's ordinary habits as well, though, and to frightening proportions: to submerge a personal life in the cycles of an impersonal earth, one's willing of what is to come must accord with what "An Ordinary Evening" calls the "the will of wills" (410). One's desire must desire its own elimination.

Because "Auroras" knows the means and cost of that self-abnegation to be an evacuation of memory, this poem faces the problem of recollection that "Notes" avoids. However painful the process, the "tomorrow" (362) of "Auroras" would eradicate the sense of having-been that proves one's division from the world's "new-come bee" (338). "Farewell" (355, 356, 357) to that sense, Stevens writes; farewell to the past; farewell to all reminders of "something else, last year / Or before" (356). The repeated good-byes of "Auroras" render yesterday no more than "an idea" (355, 356, 357); they elegize elegy, we might say, using the genre's characteristic repetitions to eradicate rather than preserve what has been. Stevens had long known that "practice" for death, in "a world without heaven to follow" (104), must be the "Waving Adieu, Adieu, Adieu" that an earlier poem describes, and he repeats in "Notes" the importance of "throw[ing] off" (330) what one has "like a thing of another time." "Auroras," however, casts away not just a particular event but an entire personhood: the

very idea, self-constitutive and self-confirming, of an individual history. 40 However much one desires it, this identity cannot be preserved; neither a mother's adulation nor a father's authority will survive the changes of fate. One must abandon these narcissistic props, forgo the assumption that human life is a scripted story designed by parental solicitude; the only true theater is the indifferent, impersonal process of the northern lights themselves. This earthly transience will destroy the "scholar of one candle"—the distinct self, holding his own light, who sees the fires of necessity "flaring on the frame / Of everything he is" (359).

"And he feels afraid" (359), writes Stevens. "Auroras" presents the greatest risk in Stevens's poetry. But it also presents the greatest reward. Through bidding farewell to the idea of this "single man" and his single past, Stevens finds a new identity and a new past. If one no longer seeks to retain a specific childhood, the poem finds, a changeful fate does not seem like vituperative opposition. Rather, it can be the object of one's quest. Free of human parentage, a poet can take necessity itself as both birthright and heritage. He finds, in so doing, precisely the security that he had thought lost, the "transparen[t] . . . peace" of a childhood union and the reassuring beneficence of a "mother's face"—the very "purpose of the poem" (356), Stevens writes. This is the same "vivid transparence" and "peace" (329) that impel "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," as the envoi to that work suggests, and the same that the poet anticipates in the crystalline harmony of its conclusion. In canto 9 of "Auroras" he may finally "partake thereof":

Lie down like children in this holiness, As if, awake, we lay in the quiet of sleep,

As if the innocent mother sang in the dark

Of the room and on the accordion, half-heard,

Created the time and place in which we breathed . . . (361)

Eden is no longer the paradise from which humanity has been exiled, but the innocence of one's present setting and of any possible imminence. The scene realizes the project of a poem as early as "Sunday Morning," where Stevens first wrote that we see in death that inevitable "fulfilment to our dreams / And our desires," our "earthly mothers" (55). He had long known that inhuman, earthly matter could provide human meaning. "It is the earth itself that is humanity" (388), he writes in "World Without Pe-

culiarity."The conscious abandonment of peculiarity in "Auroras" shows how this can be so—and how the result is neither vague panpsychism nor pure materialism but a durable post-theological basis for identity. In "Auroras," Stevens's accession to impersonal fate discovers a personal history; his accord with the future finds a restorative repetition of the past; his acceptance of transience grants the confirmation of a return.

Like all Stevens's worldly returns, this fateful tomorrow is neither absolute replication nor absolute flux, neither the "volume of the past," we might say, nor "fleeting thing[s]." These last phrases come from Kierkegaard's Repetition (133), a work that ventures the same sort of paradox and the same sort of possibility as does Stevens's poem. Like Stevens, Kierkegaard looks to repetition, the "actuality and earnestness of existence," as the solution to dualistic anxiety, 42 and like Stevens, Kierkegaard defines such practice in contrast to recollection; his repetition would replace living backward, in self-serving allegiance to what has been, with living forward, in selfless trust in what will come. 43 Only this relinquishment grants one a past and a self, Kierkegaard explains, in the continuous movement of a faith that, resigning everything, gains everything again (40-43).44 Stevens's own faith in existence has none of the Christian theology that marks Kierkegaard's belief. Yet we can see in Stevens's strenuous affirmation of an existential "predicate" (Collected 361)—his trust in whatever unfolds from the bare "it is, it is"—the expectant futurity that for Kierkegaard defines religious conviction. The result is a very Kierkegaardian return, reversing the normal economy of memory and expectation to allow for a better instance of the identity as well as the innocence that these can provide. In Stevens's sense of repetition as in Kierkegaard's, one gains what one has been-and what one has desired, imagined, willed-through affirming what one will be.45

This comparison not only helps to clarify the stakes of Stevens's everyday repetition but also reveals how everyday repetition differentiates his work from more commonly evoked philosophical paradigms. Nietzsche, most importantly, asserts as strongly as Kierkegaard and Stevens that humans must "become who we are" (Gay 189), and many scholars have shown how Stevens's innocence shares much with Nietzsche's. Nietzsche affirms his through a love of fate similar to Stevens's, and the physical immortality that his amor fati claims is an extremity of recurrence that he names the "eternal return" (Zarathustra 257). A Nietzsche's repetition, however, ends in a selflessness almost mystical, an ecstasy from which

Zarathustra sees "space and time" sparkle "far away" (259). Kierkegaard's. by contrast, takes up a concrete, individual existence, a practice in which his hero "calmly goes his way, happy in repetition" (Fear 132). A similar confidence and calm constitute the achievement of Stevens's late work. where awareness of an eternally returning tomorrow deepens the importance of ordinarily repetitive days, and the turbulent conclusion of "The Auroras of Autumn" leads to poems of "A Quiet Normal Life" (Collected 443).47 Many late letters emphasize the "round and round and round" (Huntington WAS 372, 18 Nov. 1949) of that regimen; he tells one correspondent "we are well by day and by night" (WAS 3811, 5 Oct. 1954) and celebrates to another the "ease" that comes from "going to bed and getting up early" (Letters 826). Stevens even refuses a chair in poetry at Harvard, in one letter, because he does not want to forgo "the routine of the office" (853). As "Auroras" suggests no less than "An Ordinary Evening" or "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," Stevens's office routine was already a poetic appointment; and his commitment to such "regimen," as he explains in a letter written soon after "Auroras" (615), was a "Seelensfriede" by which he could enjoy "the mere act of being alive." The poet of that "personal absurdity," a great modernist writer and successful insurance executive who walked to work at the Hartford every morning, seems less a Nietzschean prophet or superman than a Kierkegaardian knight of faith.

He is also the "Ruler of Reality" (Collected 414) that Stevens imagines in "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven," canto 27. Echoing "Auroras," this slighted section further details the salvation a poet can find in the ordinary mode of "An Ordinary Evening." The poem's final persona here rests contented besides the ocean of mortality from "Auroras" or the "fire-feinting sea" (285) of necessity from "Esthétique du Mal." His rule is one more mastery of repetition, in which his thoughts play consort to the "Queen of Fact":

Sunrise is his garment's hem, sunset is hers. He is the theorist of life, not death, The total excellence of its total book. (414)

The largest order of existence, these lines suggest, is a tournamonde world, a day-and-night pattern of sunrise and sunset or imagination and actuality. Death is only a part of the vital totality: every "Ordinary Evening," even a fatal one, yields to another aurora. Even the "outlandish," in the words

of "The Auroras of Autumn," comes as "another day // Of the week" (361–62). Such days, moreover, confirm one's own theories and histories. "He has thought it out, he thinks it out," Stevens writes of his ruler, "as he has been and is (414)."The periodic syntax of this canto—the recurrent "again" of the scholar's writing, as well as the parallel clauses of the text that he writes—rhetorically enacts the assurance in a life of returns, where any fact to which one wakes is a reality one's "fore-meaning" helps to create.

"The Auroras of Autumn" suggests the same with its own description of life's "total excellence" (414), an innocence "Like a book at evening beautiful but untrue, / Like a book on rising beautiful and true" (361).49 These lines make the beautiful truth of "Auroras" into one more everyday Keatsian dream, rising to its own proof; indeed, cantos 8 and 9 cast one's entire life as such a dream, an existence in which one imagines, "sticky with sleep" (362), the innocent tomorrow of a return to dust. Keats implies this, seeing the pattern of Adam's dream and waking as the pattern of "human Life and its spiritual repetition" (Letters 37). In "The Auroras" and "An Ordinary Evening" Stevens extends the quotidian implications of Keats's very earthly heaven, finding recompense not in the repetition of the hereafter but in the returns of the here and now. The paradisal song of an "innocent mother" in "Auroras" plays nothing more or less than an earthly "time and place" (361), the same "poem of the earth" (730) that Stevens imagines in "An Ordinary Evening" and plays on the "Blue Guitar." The tender truth of that song's innocence, "Auroras" therefore promises, inheres in even the most ordinary rhythms, and Stevens suggests as much in late letters, when he writes that daily rounds are a "profound grace" as well as a "destiny" (843), or explains that "A walk to the office restores one's innocence" (Huntington WAS 3753, 23 Apr. 1951).

"[A]nd almost the best innocence of the U.S.A.," that letter adds: an earthly heaven is a common, democratic one. 50 "The Auroras of Autumn" suggests this fact when it moves smoothly from an affirmation of necessity to an invocation of community—a group of "hale-hearted landsmen" (361). Stevens would overcome the alienation of singularity with an identity grounded in a collective setting; thus this poem, Stevens's most personal, must also be his most public. Conviction of worldly innocence means the assurance that "We were as Danes in Demark all day long" and "knew each other well." "We thought alike," Stevens writes,

And that made brothers of us in a home In which we fed on being brothers, fed

And fattened as on a decorous honeycomb. (362)

To take one's time and place as inheritance and dwelling is to acknowledge indigenous fraternity with everyone on earth. In one of Stevens's favorite puns, this shared native place is a honeycomb—"decorous" in its beauty as well as its appropriateness—that both feeds and manifests human be(e)ing.

It is also a language: these landsmen think alike and think of each other in "the idiom of an innocent earth" (361). The line might remember Paulhan's comparison of language and honey, "which bees make apparently without thinking about it" (Paulhan 8); Stevens would certainly have appreciated that the English word commonplace, like the lieu commun that Paulhan praises, equates a shared rhetoric with a shared setting.⁵¹ In "Auroras," this idiom furthers the daily music of the blue guitar or the "blazoned days" (332) of "Notes," affirming that humankind's creations join the maternal song of its environment: as Keats argues in "The Fall of Hyperion," any person can be a poet, or tell his dreams, "if he had lov'd / And been well nurtured in his mother tongue" (361). When Stevens specifies that tongue as the song of an "innocent mother" (Collected 361), the love it would speak as desire for an earthly parent, he extends Keats's commonplace poetics to include the entire "drama that we live" (362)—as a mortal existence, in its imagination of innocence, overcomes its guilty fear of any conclusion.

The Rock, Stevens's last collection, describes that lifelong dream, beginning with "An Old Man Asleep" (427) and ending with an old man just waking up.⁵² It repeatedly manifests the quotidian mode that starts in "The Man with the Blue Guitar," deepens its joyful possibility in "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," and strengthens its existential power in "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven" and "The Auroras of Autumn": an everyday practice evident, for example, in the routine matins of "Song of Fixed Accord" (441) or the habitual morning expectation of "The World as Meditation" (441–42) or the sunlit "over and over" (449) of "St. Armorer's Church from the Outside." To trace Stevens's use of everyday repetition is to see why such works should seem so quietly fitting as culmination to his art—and so serenely adequate as preparation for his

death. If "Poetry is a response to the daily necessity of getting the world right" (913), as Stevens writes in his "Adagia," an understanding of the daily deepens our understanding of both his poetry and its necessity.

Notes

- 1. For Stevens's routine, see in particular Joan Richardson's *The Later Years* 87–88, 143–44, 161, 300–01.
- 2. Wallace Stevens Collection, Huntington Library, WAS 2515, 28 June 1955. All subsequent parenthetical references to the Wallace Stevens Collection in the Huntington Library are abbreviated Huntington.
- 3. Liesl Olson argues that a "satisfaction with the commonplace . . . becomes the most distinctive mark of Stevens' modernism . . . and the most resonating influence of his work" ("Modernism" 186); she follows James Longenbach's and Alan Filreis's attention to the Stevensian quotidian as part of a "plain sense of things" or the "actual world."Yet while Olson notes Stevens's routine, she does not explicate how or why it should be crucial; nor does Longenbach's attention to Stevensian repetition explore the philosophical possibilities of daily recurrence.
- 4. Criticism often links Stevens's meditations on a dualistic dichotomy to his importance for modernism: as Bart Eeckhout summarizes it, epistemological uncertainty about the "knowledge relation between subject and object" reached "a stage of intense crisis" during the modernist era, in which "Stevens stands out ... because of the consistency, the near-obsessiveness, and the endless originality with which he pursued [this theme] in poem after poem" (109).
- 5. A. Walton Litz describes Stevens's emphasis on "the cyclical orders of nature" (180); George Bornstein argues that he developed "romantic cyclicity . . . in new ways" (173); Angus Fletcher names Stevens "the late romantic master of the hypercyclical" (ix). Frank Kermode describes Stevens's seasons as "phases of human life" (Stevens 34); Frank Doggett notes Stevens's use of "earth's cycles" in his own "cycle of being" (61–64); George Lensing describes "the four seasons" in Stevens's verse as four states of "a highly personal psychodrama" (118).
- 6. Richardson writes that "only when his days and nights followed a predictable rhythm, like the movements of the earth in its rotation and orbit," could Stevens write poetry (*Later Years* 48).
- 7. Alan Ryan notes that Art as Experience "emphasized Dewey's familiar themes of the values of wholeness and unity in experience," a wholeness that might

help to solve "the relationship of man to nature and man to culture" (262). For a good summary of Dewey's indifference to individualism, see Louis Menand; see also Ryan 156. Dewey's own writing implies that his emphasis on experience provides a new version of human selfhood; in *Individualism Old and New*, for example, he criticizes an identity based on "dualism" (*Later Works* 114) and "anti-naturalism" and argues that true individualism "develops into shape and form only through interaction with actual conditions" (121)—through a "naturalism," that is, "which perceives that man with his habits, institutions, desires, thoughts, aspirations, ideals, and struggles, is within nature" (114).

- 8. Poirier argues that a transitive literature allows a process of self-assertion through self-contradiction, describing how the "act of self-erasure, of disowning the words by which just a few seconds ago you may have identified yourself, becomes in fact, and paradoxically, an indication of selfhood" (Poetry 11) for the Emersonian pragmatism he would define. See also Poirier's Poetry 20, 29, 75, 153–54, 191–92; and Renewal 16–17, 172–81, 183–95. To understand this assertion and erasure as a regular daily recurrence, however, is to suggest why Stevens's endlessly remade self constitutes a life of ordered assurance rather than the trial of risky, frightening mutability that Poirier seems to describe. Stevens can entertain the thought that "the very idea of Man, of the individual, of the self, ought to be done away with altogether" (Renewal 181), as Poirier argues that a pragmatist poetics must, sure that this very idea will repeatedly and inevitably return.
- 9. Olson agrees that in this poem Stevens "discovers the quotidian as an answer to the life-long dilemma of how to live" ("Modernism" 165).
- 10. Early analysis of Stevens, including Harold Bloom's and Joseph N. Riddel's, emphasizes the imaginative side of the imagination/reality divide, as does Joseph Carroll's more recent work; later reassessments, including Longenbach's and Filreis's, stress a sense of reality. Roy Harvey Pearce describes a poet of "both sides" (129), as does Richardson (Early 241). Paul A. Bové (181–207), Kermode ("Dwelling"), J. Hillis Miller (157), William V. Spanos (27–50), and Gyorgyi Voros (88–97) all see Stevens as a Heideggerian poet, in various ways denying the distinction of dualistic metaphysics, and Steven Shaviro argues for a Nietzschean reading beyond "dualisms of subject and object" (220).
- 11. Miller notes that the "experience of the repetitive and the cyclical is at the heart of this poem" (200).
- 12. Bonnie Costello notes a similar phenomenon when she describes how in Stevens's work "metaphysical inventions . . . learn their changes less from autonomous compositional laws than from physical surroundings" (69); I hope to suggest how this education relies on daily experience.

- 13. My description thus agrees with Doggett's account of Stevens's time, "a mingling of repetition and alteration" (61), Litz's account of "Notes," in which "the constant in time is change" (267), and Mary Doyle Springer's analysis of Stevens's repetitions, "slightly different each time they occur" (194); in linking this mode with a quotidian refutation of skepticism, I hope to show the implications of these excellent descriptions.
- 14. Longenbach links Stevens's repetitions in "Notes" to Cavell's philosophy (264–65, 269), and Cavell himself argues that Stevens's poetics, like his own philosophy, defeats skepticism through an everyday "faithfulness, as daily as the coming of the sun" ("Reflections" 75).
- 15. Cavell's attention to the common, he writes, "derives from . . . later Wittenstein and from J. L. Austin, in their attention to the language of ordinary or everyday life" (Quest 4); in another text, he describes "Wittgenstein's insight" as the "overcoming of iteration or replication or imitation by repetition" (New 47).
- 16. Olson connects Stevens's trust in the commonplace with his trust in language, though her work does not detail how repetition grounds this trust ("Ordinary" 167–68; "Commonplace" 114).
- 17. This distinguishes Stevens's "bread of faithful speech" (Collected 352), I think, from Poirier's descriptions of a pragmatist use of language, in which the necessary but antagonistic employment of words means that each fresh utterance is "contaminated" by an already old medium (Renewal 143). Poirier is right that the strength of literature, in a pragmatist sense, is that it "demonstrates what can be made, what can be done with something shared by everyone, used by everyone in the daily conduct of life" (133), but Stevens demonstrates this in his use of common time as well as of common words and therefore seeks less assertive originality than harmonious creativity.
- 18. See also Paulhan 46-53, 71-83, and 87-94.
- 19. Stevens quotes Paulhan's text in "Imagination as Value"—a lecture written at the time of "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven"—in the light of the "chief problems of any artist, as of any man," the "problems of the normal" (Collected 739). Stevens's letters and essays show his respectful interest in Paulhan (Letters 376–79, 566–67, 573, 687, 725–26, 744, 747–48, 800; Collected 860–61; see also Richardson, Later 180, 272, 384–85).
- 20. Of course, critics who emphasize Stevensian idealism draw the same opposition. Carroll, for example, sees Stevens's truest mode as a "pure poetry" of "mystical vision" opposed to "the enjoyments of common life" (93).

- 21. In one letter Stevens writes that newspapers should report "the dazzle over the Florida Keys" on their front page (*Letters* 721), and in his poem "Of Hartford in a Purple Light" he greets the sun, "Master Soleil," with the pomp appropriate to a political dignitary (*Collected* 208). He once sent a friend a newspaper clipping describing the first robin sighting of spring (Huntington WAS 3708, 25 Feb. 1949).
- 22. This argument also distinguishes my view from J. S. Leonard and C. E. Wharton's description of Stevens's dual world; their "fiction of the whole" (165) seems more concept than setting or practice (145–65).
- 23. For recent analyses of Stevens's vision of nature, see Voros, esp. 2–11, and Costello 53–85. Costello notes that Stevens's poems "infuse the experience of space with the sense of time" (73), but she finds this practice ultimately to be "tragic," thwarting the "unattainable desire for centered wholeness" (73–74), whereas I hope to show that Stevens's vision of natural time is not mere "flux and change" (Costello 205n13) but an antitragic recurrence.
- 24. Olson cites Stevens's attention to the normal as an attention to the "social" ("Ordinary" 176; "Commonplace" 107) but focuses on Stevens's curiosity about other people's ordinary lives, particularly through his correspondence, rather than the way his ordinary poetics addresses social problems.
- 25. Christopher Miller's study provides an exception, reading Stevens's work as a late example of the romantic poetics of evening, but while he suggests that Stevensian evenings are part of an "ongoing meditation on perception and the forms of time" (196), Miller does not pursue the diurnally recurrent order of this meditation (196–202).
- 26. For Stevens's love of "Endymion" see Letters 28–29, 147. For his anxieties over the division of night and day see, for instance, the early poem "Anecdote of Canna" (Collected 44) or the journal entry in which he worries about becoming a "dilettante—half dream, half deed" (Letters 34).
- 27. Critical comparisons of Stevens and Keats focus much more on a shared sense of nature than on a conflation of poetry and darkness. Bloom and Carroll provide exceptions, but neither sees Stevens's dreams as part of a valuation of ordinary life; indeed, Carroll implies the opposite (Bloom, *Climate* 351; Carroll 98–99).
- 28. In 1947 Stevens copied into his commonplace book an extensive quotation from Lionel Trilling's essay "Freud and Literature," which states in part that "Of all mental systems, the Freudian psychology is the one which makes poetry indigenous to the very constitution of the mind" (Sur 89).

- 29. Richardson argues that Freud was more important to Stevens than his admissions suggest (*Later* 54–55).
- 30. The quoted terms are taken from an earlier lecture, "The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words," in which Stevens also argues against Freud's text.
- 31. For an excellent discussion of Stevens's covenant imagery, see Cook 149–51.
- 32. For the first view, see Riddel 121–35 and Bloom, Climate 117–19; for the second, see Filreis, Modernism 220–90 and "1930s" 43–47.
- 33. In 1945 Stevens recommends an article by D. S. Savage arguing that socialism's "forward-looking or 'progressive' character" focuses too exclusively on an "end... in the *future*"; see *Letters* 486; Savage 17.
- 34. Filreis notes that "the poet's attraction to communism" was "a form of his attraction to ... romanticism" but does not emphasize the futurity basic to these yearnings (*Modernism* 178).
- 35. Litz contrasts the "Utopia" of "Time in its final block" with the "wrangling of dream and reality which is our life in time" (257).
- 36. Stevens's lines evoke "Strange Fruit," and he may have known the song, but there is no indication that he intends to refer to lynching here. Charles Berger describes other possible alllusions, comparing Stevens's "bare limbs" to the setting of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and Stevens's "hanging" to the suicides that Dante describes in hell (71).
- 37. Bloom's analysis of Stevens's "belatedness" is one of few extended discussions of this problem, but Bloom describes an anxiety about poetic predecessors rather than about human time more generally (*Climate* 82; see also *Repression* 287–91).
- 38. Jahan Ramazani reads this passage as consolatory (121–22). Stevens's Omega alludes to Keats's Moneta in "The Fall of Hyperion," a "pale Omega" figure of the moon and memory (*Poems* 368).
- 39. Helen Vendler describes "Notes" as an "escape from . . . self-pity and its literary forms—nostalgia and elegy" (205) and reads "Auroras of Autumn" as an elegy that "falters in its regressive motion toward childhood" (238). I wish to suggest that the latter poem's antielegy continues the escape that "Notes" begins.
- 40. We might see this casting away in two letters, the first addressed to Henry Church soon after "Notes" and admiring his inability to "stor[e] up knowl-

- edge": "I think only too often," Stevens writes, "that what we constantly need is a fresh start—a fresh start every day, like a clean shirt" (*Letters* 454). Six years later, after "The Auroras," Stevens's clean shirt is a more extreme proposition: he writes to Church's widow that he wishes to "throw away everything I have, each autumn" (659).
- 41. Thus while Costello links the poem's tragic "homelessness" to its "its bold engagement with . . . the temporal 'drama that we live'" (76), I wish to suggest how temporal reality provides a home in this poem.
- 42. Springer links Stevens's repetition with Kierkegaard's (195) but does not analyze "Auroras"; Mazur invokes Kierkegaard (16) but does not apply his philosophy to analysis of Stevens.
- 43. "[W]hat is recollected has been, is repeated backward," writes Kierkegaard of his contrast, "whereas genuine repetition is recollected forward. Repetition, therefore, if it is possible, makes a person happy, whereas recollection makes him unhappy" (Fear 131).
- 44. Niels Nymann Eriksen provides an invaluable explication of the dynamic; see especially 42-49.
- 45. Kierkegaard writes that a repeated choice of existence allows a person to "become what he is" (Concluding 489).
- 46. For critical comparisons see especially Bloom, who relates Stevens's innocence in "Auroras" to Nietzsche's eternal return (Climate 277); Leonard and Wharton, who read Stevens's mastery of repetition as "a Nietzschean 'amor fati" (123); and B. J. Leggett, who analyzes Stevens's "Sunday Morning" as "the first post-Nietzschean poetry of amor fati" (96).
- 47. This comparison might also amend the many readings of Stevensian innocence as a Heideggerian Being, whether that Being is conceived of as dwelling or difference; these include Thomas J. Hines's (251) and Voros's (88–97) readings of "Auroras," Kermode's reading of the late work ("Dwelling" 144–59), Bové's (181–207) and Spanos's (27–50) readings of Stevens's place in literary history, and J. Hillis Miller's description of a "poetry of Being" (157). Such analyses tend to slight the existential dynamics of repetition in Heidegger's thought and Stevens's verse, as well as the possibilities for individualism in both; Stevens's everyday poetry extends Heidegger's description of *Dasein* as a "coming-towards-oneself" that is also a "coming-back to one's ownmost Self" (388).
- 48. Richardson reads Stevens's commitment to the office as evidence of psychological weakness (Later 300-01), and other biographical analyses cite Ste-

vens's financial anxiety or masculine insecurity (Sharpe 4; Grey 48), but I hope to suggest poetic reasons as well.

- 49. In a late letter Stevens writes of imagining poetry by imagining "a page of a large book" (642): "what one ought to find," he adds, "is . . . every-day reality" (643).
- 50. This again distinguishes Stevens's love of fate from Nietzsche's; as Milton J. Bates notes, Stevens's interest in the "the common man" was hardly Nietzschean (262).
- 51. See Cook's suggestive reading of the implications of commonplace (274).
- 52. Isabel G. MacCaffrey notes that "The Rock is in some sense an old poet's dream" (609).

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"Stench!" Arnold Bennett's End and the Beginning of Finnegans Wake

Tom Henthorne

[Arnold Bennett] said that nothing was so insular and absurd as to suppose that the ordinary water of Paris, indeed of France, was dangerous, since hundreds of thousands of French people never drank anything else. Drink it he would.

—Dorothy Cheston Bennett (156)

Arnold Bennett died on 27 March 1931 after contracting typhoid from a glass of water he drank in Paris that January. His spouse, Dorothy Cheston Bennett, records that he drank Parisian tap water at least twicejust before and just after dining with James and Nora Joyce for the first time (156). Although little is known about the particulars of Bennett and Joyce's encounters in Paris, for Joyce at least, they seem to have been business meetings; he hoped to enlist support for Finnegans Wake from a man who had suggested only the year before that the novel would "never be anything but the wild caprice of a wonderful creative artist who has lost his way" ("Evening Standard" Years 307). Instead of critical support, however, Bennett inadvertently provided Joyce with more material for his work, for after Bennett's death Joyce revised the Mutt/Jute dialogue in the first chapter of Finnegans Wake, figuring Jute as Bennett and using his death from drinking contaminated water to suggest that the water cycle, like all cycles in the novel, is subject to the second law of thermodynamics—in other words, it is a closed system in which entropy increases.2 Like many early twentieth-century writers, it seems, Joyce was influenced by the work of William Thomson (Lord Kelvin), who wrote that the universe would eventually come to "a state of universal rest and

death" unless God intervened (388).³ In Finnegans Wake Joyce suggests that the universe is indeed running down as the generations pass and the human world becomes increasingly polluted.

Arnold Bennett's life—and death

Although most of Bennett's work is out of print today, in the 1920s he was one of England's best-loved writers, and the story of his life as a "man from the North" was well known to his contemporaries, if only because he celebrated it in both his fictional and autobiographical writing. 4 Born in the industrial region known as the Potteries, Bennett was disadvantaged not only by his modest, provincial upbringing but also by a persistent stutter—an impediment that remained with him throughout his life. Fortunately for Bennett's prospects, his father, a potter by trade, switched professions when Bennett was young, eventually becoming a solicitor and moving his family to a prestigious neighborhood (Waterloo Road in Burslem), a change that, according to Margaret Drabble, symbolized "the ascent of the Bennett family into the middle classes" (30). Although he was an outstanding student, Bennett left school at 16 to become a clerk in his father's law office. After twice failing his legal examinations, he moved to London, and in 1891, a parody he wrote of Grant Allen's What's Bred in the Bone was published in Tit-Bits (Drabble 54). Three years later he began his career in letters, becoming an assistant editor of Woman, a popular weekly magazine, and writing short stories.

From this point on, Bennett's fortunes rose quickly. In 1898 his first novel, A Man from the North, was published, and in 1902 he established himself as a professional writer with The Grand Babylon Hotel, a society novel of sorts that was "not only sensational but sensationally successful" (Drabble 79). With the ensuing publication of more literary works such as The Old Wives' Tale (1903), Clayhanger (1910), and Riceyman Steps (1926), Bennett became a critically acclaimed author, and as a reviewer for the New Age and then the Evening Standard, he became one of Great Britain's most influential critics. By the 1920s he was a "public figure," as Walter Allen notes:

He was ... a character; he was news; he lived always in the fierce limelight of the public gaze; and he was never abashed. He was the grand panjandrum of the *Evening Standard*, making best-

"Stench!" Arnold Bennett's End and the Beginning of Finnegans Wake

sellers and rebuking Virginia Woolf at a hundred pounds per thousand words. (9)

If, as Allen notes, Bennett's praise could help a novel become a best seller, his censure could ruin one, and Bennett was known to be a direct, sometimes acerbic, critic. For example, he wrote that C. K. Chesterton's Tremendous Trifles "is blotched with . . . curt arrogance as with a skin complaint," and that Chesterton "has not got a first-class intellectual apparatus" (Books and Persons 151). One of his favorite targets was Virginia Woolf, whom he criticized for weak characterization and bad grammar, among other things (211). Eventually he and Woolf entered into a public debate on modernism and modernists, a debate that remains one of the most celebrated literary disputes of the twentieth century. 5 With regard to Joyce, Bennett was more equivocal. Although he acknowledged Joyce's "genius" (Deming 494), he was highly critical of Joyce's work, writing of A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, for example, that "large portions of it are dull, pompous, absurd, confused, and undirected" (219). Two years later, when the novel was reissued with a quote from Bennett on the dust jacket, Bennett protested, writing a letter to the Times Literary Supplement in which he indicated that his praise was for parts of Ulysses rather than Portrait, which did not impress him at all (Letters 109n). Not surprisingly, perhaps, Joyce avoided a public debate with Bennett in the TLS, instead exchanging polite private letters. Apparently Joyce felt he could not afford to alienate such an important critic, one whose influence, as Olga Broomfield notes, "cannot be overestimated" (136).6

The unusualness of Bennett's physical presence and demeanor cannot be overestimated either. Rebecca West describes his appearance as "astounding": "Though he was not actually obese, his outlines had the swelling quality of a balloon. He moved his limbs with a curious stiffness, as if they were thick like a pachyderm's" (5). She adds that because of his size, his stiffness, his "baroque exterior," and his stutter, "he was always the most conspicuous person present" (6). Georges Lafourcade describes him in similar terms:

stiff body, heavy limbs despite the exquisite cut of his clothes, stiff neck, head thrown back like that of a pugilist, square chin and ugly teeth over the elaborate tie, harsh voice which stammered at important words with exaggerated emphasis ... and over all the mayolesque crest of hair which gave lie to the con-

flicting expressions of self-assertion and self-consciousness ever at war on that puzzling countenance. (1)

As Lafourcade suggests, Bennett was also perceived as a man of contradictions: vulgar yet elegant, self-conscious yet confident, stuttering yet articulate. His behavior, too, sometimes seemed contradictory, even hypocritical. As a critic he was quick to denounce obscenity, and yet some of his own works were judged obscene by others. As Broomfield notes, Bennett's novel Sacred and Profane Love (1905) was "repudiated by critics for its vulgarity and lack of restraint" (6), and The Pretty Lady (1918) "caused a furor in publishing and critical circles as a decadent and pornographic book" (10). His personal life was not beyond reproach either: although he was considered a respectable man for most of his life, in 1921 he and his spouse, Marguerite Soulie Bennett, separated, and in the following year he began a very public relationship with Dorothy Cheston, an actress nearly half his age, eventually having a child with her (Drabble 275). In 1924 Soulie, who refused to divorce Bennett, published a detailed account of their marriage in the Daily Express, adding to his notoriety. As Drabble observes, Bennett was "gossip-column news in a big way" (297).

Given his prominence, unusual physical appearance, and behavior that was considered scandalous, at least at the time, it is not surprising that Bennett was frequently the object of satire. Even those who admired him conceded that there was something ridiculous about him. In his otherwise flattering biography of Bennett, Walter Allen, for example, writes that the "public" Bennett was captured perfectly in a caricature drawn by David Low:

Short, stiff, pompous, plump, in tails, with fob and carnation, head erect and surmounted by the famous coxcomb, Bennett steps forward . . . to meet a lord, to call a cabinet minister by his Christian name, to dance with a dowager, to tell the world with downright assertion. It is a masterful delineation of vanity, of provincial vulgarity; the strutting poseur might be a mayor who had made his money in brass or possibly pots. (10)

Bennett was frequently the object of literary satires as well.⁷ In "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley," for example, Ezra Pound depicts Bennett in "the cream guilded cabin of his steam yacht" where he admits that, as a critic, he "never mentioned a man but with the view / Of selling my own works"

(194). Similarly, Wyndham Lewis portrays Bennett as Samuel Shodbutt, a "self-made Potentate of the Pen" who has the power "to make and to mar" other writers (28). To an extent, Joyce's representation of Bennett in Finnegans Wake can be regarded as another of these literary satires. Rather than simply caricature Bennett, however, Joyce uses the story of his life and death to develop the theme of degeneration, a theme integral to the parts of the novel that had already been published in the periodical transition in April 1927. Bennett's death from contaminated water afforded Joyce an opportunity to highlight further the degenerate nature of the water cycle, since the cause of Bennett's death was very widely publicized both in Great Britain and the United States.9

Pollution, degeneration, and entropy

in Finnegans Wake

As Clive Hart demonstrates, the water cycle is one of the most important motifs in Finnegans Wake (44-77). Indeed, the novel's structure is based on it, beginning in midsentence with the word "riverrun" (3.1) and ending with the beginning of the same sentence—"A way a lone a last a loved a long the" (628.15-16). What is less immediately apparent, perhaps, is the degenerate nature of that cycle and the other cycles represented in the book. 10 Just as in the cycle of generations, Adam degenerates into Finn MacCool and so on down through HCE and his sons, so the clean water that God separated from the firmament in Genesis is consumed by people whose wastes contaminate rivers that, in turn, pollute the oceans out of which the clouds that produce fresh water are created. Joyce connects the two degenerating cycles through Anna Livia Plurabelle (ALP), an Eve-like figure who is presented as being both a progenitor and the Liffey, the river that washes through Dublin into Dublin Bay. Despite being "Annah the Allmaziful, the Everliving, the Bringer of Plurabilities," a figure of almost mythical power, ALP cannot regenerate that which is corrupt (104.1-2). Like Eve's descendents, hers are still stained by the sin of their forebears, and like the cleansing waters of a river, she herself becomes dirtier as she cleans others, a point reinforced by the Washers in the Ford episode, where the washing of clothes leaves the water "black" (196.12).11

The degenerative nature of both the water cycle and the cycle of generations is perhaps most evident in the novel's closing monologue, when

ALP, figured as the Liffey, has run her course and is returning to the ocean, polluted by what William York Tindall identifies as "all of the flotsam of the Wake and little of its jetsam" (325). As she makes her way through Dublin ("Dirtdump" [615.12]), she reflects back on the very beginning of the cycle, when she was just moisture in the sky: "My great blue bedroom the air so quiet, scarce a cloud. In peace and silence. I could have stayed up there for always only. It's something fails us. First we feel. Then we fall" (627.9-11). That ALP identifies the "fall" with sensuality—the ability to "feel"-among other things, is significant, since it suggests not only that she herself has been corrupted but also that corruption is a part of what it is to be human. She then imagines the cycle beginning again as newly formed clouds release their moisture: "And let her rain now if she likes. Gently or strongly as she likes. Anyway let her rain for my time is come" (627.11-13). As Suzette Henke suggests, the "she" ALP refers to in this passage is her own daughter Issy, who, she says, is already "[s] wimming in my hindmoist. Diveltaking on me tail" (627.3-4): Issy is to replace ALP as the mother/river as the cycle of generations continues (201). Although Issy too has the power to cleanse, like her mother she cannot regenerate, for she too is part of a closed system in which entropy increases. Indeed, as a product of increasingly degenerate cycles, Issy is not her mother's equal any more than ALP was the equal of her own mother. In the closing monologue, the source of this corruption is represented primarily by incest: Issy is to be her own "ensectuous" father's "daughterwife" as the cycle of generations continues (29.30; 627.2), leading ALP to remark, "she'll be as sweet for you [HCE] as I was sweet when I came down out of me mother" (627.7-9).12 Such inbreeding leads to degeneration, of course, something that is reflected in the cycle of generations as the giants of old give way to lesser beings such as HCE.13

As indicated earlier, Joyce's representation of degenerating cycles corresponds to the second law of thermodynamics: in a closed system, entropy increases. In *Finnegans Wake* the human universe is "running down" just as the physical one is. In order to make the connection between the two more concrete, Joyce inscribes the second law of thermodynamics into the novel's final chapter, the *ricorso*, in which all if its main themes are revisited:¹⁴

primeval conditions having gradually receded but nevertheless the emplacement of solid and fluid having to a great extent persisted through intermittences of sullemn fulminance solemn

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nuptialism, sallemn spelture and providential divining, making possible and even inevitable . . . morphological circumformation in a more or less settled state of equonomic ecolube equalobe quilab equilibrium. (599.9–18)

In Finnegans Wake everything moves toward "equilibrium": that which was pure becomes corrupt, just as, according to the second law of thermodynamics, energy continually dissipates, eventually becoming inert.

If the cycles ALP represents are subject to degeneration, it is ALP's husband, HCE, and his "samesake sibsubstitues[s]" (28.35)—Finnegan, Brian Boru, the Russian General, St. Kevin, Shem, and Shaun among others—who represent the primary source of corruption: they are the ones who corrupt the cycle of generations through incest and pollute the water cycle by, among other things, dumping human wastes into the marsh. As ALP observes, "All men has done something" (621.32). It is their sins that corrupt humankind and their wastes that pollute the water cycle, ultimately leading to stasis.

Although references to pollution occur throughout the novel, only the first chapter connects the polluted water cycle to the typhoid Bennett apparently contracted in Paris. Indeed, as John Gordon notes (106), the chapter's first word, "riverrun," suggests not only the course of a river but also "riverain" (river dweller) and "reverrons" ("let's dream" in French). Gordon adds: "French is the right language, after all, for a dreamer in Paris [Joyce] envisioning himself as returning from Armorica, to see again his native land, the old home of the river." French is also the appropriate language for introducing the polluted water cycle, since Paris was reputed to have the foulest water in Europe. Such an interpretation seems to be reinforced by the word "commodious" in the novel's opening lines, a word that, as Tindall reminds us, refers to, among other things, a commode (30). With this in mind, "commodius vicus of recirculation" suggests that the water cycle is indeed a closed system that is contaminated by its own waste. 15

Joyce, Bennett, and the Mutt/Jute dialogue

As if to stress the significance of human waste in the novel, the opening chapter is replete with references to sights, sounds, and smells of defecation. And as Gordon notes, the Waterloo episode, which precedes the Mutt/Jute dialogue, has an "undeniably excremental cast" to it:

As Stephen puts it in *Ulysses* 571, "Waterloo is a closet"—also a "loo," a spelling which may remind us of the O O symbol once common on public toilets, which symbol will hereafter be connected with enactments of sex, creation, and sexual creation. Thus do events establish a reason for what J. S. Atherton has discerned to be the great heresy on which *Finnegans Wake* is based, the belief that creation and fall are one, the act of generation and act of pollution. (112)

Atherton's observations concerning the relationship between generation and pollution, together with Gordon's close reading of the Waterloo episode, affirm that the water cycle—like all cycles in *Finnegans Wake*—is degenerative. "Waterloo" appears to be more than just a reference to a climactic battle and a watercloset, however; it is also the name of the street Bennett celebrated in his autobiographical writings and novels. Accordingly, when he rewrote chapter 1 in 1931, the Waterloo episode provided Joyce with a perfect context for introducing Arnold Bennett into the *Wake* in the form of Jute. 17

In the version of the Mutt/Jute dialogue that appeared as a work in progress in transition, April 1927, Mutt, an Irishman, comes across Jute, a Saxon invader, beside a great mound near Dublin Bay. Mutt tries to initiate a conversation with Jute, hailing him in a number of languages, including Danish, Norwegian, English, and Anglo-Saxon. Jute initially responds only in monosyllables, so Mutt decides he must be deaf. He soon discovers that he has difficulty in communicating with Jute for different reasons: Jute is both a foreigner and a stutterer. 18 The two eventually begin to talk in a patois ("patwhat" [23]), with Mutt acting as the local and Jute as the tourist, as Danis Rose and John O'Hanlon note (18). Mutt explains that he became a stutterer ("stun a stummer" [22]) at the battle of Clontarf ("Dungtarf"). Remembering the battle-and the death of Brian Boru, an eleventh-century Irish leader-Mutt becomes angry: "I trumple from rath in mine mines when I rimimirim [remember him]!" Jute gives Mutt a "sylvan coyne," calming him, and Mutt goes on to provide Jute with some local color, hoping for another handout. He tells Jute that Boru, who corresponds to HCE among others, was "poached on in that eggtentical spot." Demonstrating his erudition, Jute replies that according to Tacitus ("Taciturn"), Boru/HCE was shot for having contaminated the water with human wastes. 19 Mutt affirms this, comparing Boru/HCE's

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act to putting a "puddinstone [fecal matter] inat the brookcells by a riverpool." Wanting to know even more detail about what happened at Clontarf, Jute asks what Boru/HCE used to wipe himself: "Wid wad for a norse like?"20 Mutt thinks he has been asked what noise Boru/HCE made while defecating and responds by imitating the sound: "Rooks roarum rex roome!" Although Jute does not understand what Mutt says. he objects to the "umscene" noise, chastises him, and takes his leave (23). Mutt detains him ("Bussave a sec"), however, still hoping to earn another coin. He tells Jute more about the area, describing the various sediments the river has deposited on the bank, making a huge, filthy mound. The mound, he indicates, has "swollup" (swallowed up) everyone and everything: "Hereinunder lyethey. Llarge by the smal an' everynight life olso the estrange, babylone the great-grandhotelled with tit tit tittlehouse, alp on earwig, drukn on ild, likeas equal to anequal in this sound seemetery wich iz leebez luv." He adds, "This ourth of years is not save brickdust and being humus the same roturns," the last two words invoking the great, cyclical theme of the novel. Having provided Jute with more local color, Mutt asks for more money—for "fare for Humblin [Dublin]," a phrase that suggests the conversion of food to waste—and the episode ends soon afterward.

Like everyone in *Finnegans Wake*, Mutt and Jute correspond to multiple characters, including Shem and Shaun, Jerry and Kevin, Butt and Taff, Muta and Juva, among others. The relationship between them, too, represents that between many types, including invaded and invader, local and tourist, and comedian and straight man. They can also be understood as writer and critic, for Mutt earns money through his words and the horrified Jute pronounces judgment on them. One could even argue that Joyce identified Jute directly with Bennett in this early version of the episode, since, like Bennett, Jute stutters, and in describing the wastes buried in the mound, Mutt alludes to Bennett's *The Grand Babylon Hotel* ("babylone the great–grandhotelled" [23]). Certainly Bennett was one of the people Joyce had in mind when drafting the episode.

In the revised version of the Mutt/Jute dialogue, the connection between Jute and Bennett is more concrete, since additions Joyce made after meeting with Bennett in 1931 seem to refer directly to Bennett and his death. In the later version of the dialogue, Mutt greets Jute as if they were in France, just as Joyce and Bennett were when they met in 1931: "Come on, fool porterfull, hosiered women blown monk sewer," which,

as Tindall notes, can be read as "Comment vous portez-vous, aujourd'hui, mon blond monsieur" (16). Mutt's words represent more than just a French greeting: in English they offer a brief description of Bennett, his vices, and the cause of his death. "Porterfull" appears to be a reference to Bennett's portliness, and "women blown" suggests that he was a skirtchaser of sorts. The fact that the women he chases are "hosiered" may be a reference to Dorothy Cheston, who, as an actress, could be identified with such stockings. The juxtaposition of "hosiered women blown" and "monk" may be a reference to Bennett's seeming hypocrisy: Bennett would condemn others, including Joyce, for licentiousness and vulgarity even though he himself was guilty of the same, both in his writing and his personal life. Finally, "sewer," of course, refers to the source of the contaminated water that Bennett drank while in Paris just before and after meeting Joyce. In this one incredibly compact line, it seems, Joyce employs two languages not only to advance the Mutt/Jute episode but to relate the story of Bennett's life and death.

Other details Joyce added to the opening of the episode also make Jute seem more Bennett-like. For example, when Mutt first comes across Jute, he comments on Jute's size and stiffness, just as many of Bennett's contemporaries did: "He hath locktoes, this shortshins, and, Obeold that's pectoral, his mammamuscles most mousterious" (15.31–33). Mutt's description of Jute as a fire-breathing "dragon man" (15.35) seems to refer to Bennett's acerbic practices as a critic, as does the line about Jute's "slaking muncheon out of some thing's brain pan" (15.34–35): ²¹ as a writer who profited from attacking other writers in his criticism, Bennett could be considered a cannibal of sorts. Finally, the revised version anglifies the "sylvan coyne" Jute gives Mutt as if Jute were an Englishman like Bennett, referring to the money as guineas ("Ghinees" [16.31]). ²²

Just as Jute corresponds to Bennett, Mutt, the polyglot Irishman with "One eyegoneblack" (16.29), corresponds to Joyce, the storyteller, as Tindall has noted (43). The fact that Joyce added the reference to the eye patch in the revised version seems to affirm this correspondence, since his eye problems were particularly acute when he was revising the chapter.²³ Indeed, Bennett himself commented on Joyce being "nearly blind" in a letter describing his meeting with Joyce (*Letters* 612). The relationship between Mutt and Jute, moreover, parallels that between Joyce, an artist in need of support, and Bennett, a man with the means of providing it. In the 1927 version, the two get on well enough until Mutt imitates

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the sounds that the Irish hero, Brian Boru, made when defecating in the marsh. Jute responds by complaining that Mutt's words and sounds are at once incomprehensible and obscene: "Boildoyle and rawhoney on me when I can beuraly forsstand a weird from sturk to innic in such a patwhat as your rutterdamotter. Onheard of and umscene" (17.13-17).24 Jute's criticism of Mutt parallels Bennett's of Joyce: in 1922 Bennett wrote in Outlook that Ulysses was "indecent, obscene, scatological, and licentious" (Deming 493), and in 1929, about two years before the two met. Bennett wrote that Ulysses contains "the grossest obsenity." About a month later he wrote that he could not "understand a word" of "Anna Livia Plurabelle," and that "it ought to be published with a Joyce dictionary" ("Evening Standard" Years 307). Despite such criticism, Joyce still hoped to enlist Bennett's support for his work in progress, encouraged, perhaps, by Bennett's reference to him as a "genius" (Joyce, Letters 3: 211n). Mutt behaves similarly in his encounter with Jute; in fact, when Jute tries to leave, Mutt stops him in order to tell him the story of Ireland, a story that, like Finnegans Wake, opens with an account of merging waters that deposit filthy sediments on the shore:

Let erehm ruhmuhrmuhr. Mearmerge two races, swete and brack. Morthering rue. Hither, craching eastuards, they are in surgence: hence, cool at ebb, they requiesce. Countlessness of livestories have netherfallen by this plage, flick as flowflakes, litters from aloft, like a wasst wizard all of whirlworlds. Now are tombed to the mound, isges to isges, [m]erde from [m]erde. (17)

Offended by Mutt's scatological references, Jute offers another Bennett-like dismissal of his words: "Stench!" (17.31).

Like Joyce himself, Mutt does not despair of winning over Jute despite such sharp criticism: he continues his narrative, describing the wastes ("[m]erde") deposited by the waters into a filthy mound, wastes that include, as I indicated earlier, Bennett's novel, *The Grand Babylon Hotel*. By including Bennett's novel among the wastes, Joyce offers his own judgment of Bennett's work and of contemporary literature in general: in particular, he suggests that the success of writers such as Bennett is further evidence that literature, like everything else, is degenerating. By playing the critic in this passage, Joyce, in effect, switches hats with Bennett, just as Mutt and Jute do at the beginning of the episode (16.8).²⁵

Arnold Bennett is just one of Jute's many identities, of course: Jute is also Jeff of the Mutt and Jeff comic strip, St. Patrick, Oliver Cromwell, and many other critics, fools, and invaders. Nonetheless, Mutt's reference to The Grand Babylon Hotel is unmistakable, and some of the material Joyce added to the episode seemingly refers to Bennett himself. Although many of the apparent references to Bennett's writing-that is, to his reviews of Joyce's work and to his first successful novel, The Grand Babylon Hotel—existed in the 1927 version of the Mutt/Jute encounter, the direct references to Bennett and Joyce themselves were added only after their encounter in 1931. Joyce, it seems, rewrote the section after Bennett's death not only to caricature Bennett but also to add another set of references to the polluted water cycle. As I noted earlier, the cause of Bennett's death by contaminated water was widely known, and by alluding to it in the Mutt/Jute dialogue Joyce highlights one the novel's main themes: cycles are closed systems in which entropy increases, ultimately resulting in equilibrium or stasis. Bennett, it seems, is caught in the same cycle as HCE and his descendants—a cycle described in the following terms: "A human pest cycling (pist!) and recycling (past!) about the sledgy streets, here he was (pust!) again!" (99.4-6). Although referring to HCE here, the narrator might just as well be describing Bennett, the "fool porterfull, hosiered women blown monk sewer." Both are caught in closed cycles, cycles in which, as Mutt tells Jute, "the same roturns" (18.4).

Notes

- 1. Joyce makes it evident that he was concerned with Bennett's response to Finnegans Wake in a letter he wrote to Valéry Larbaud in September 1929: "I cannot make out A. B.'s attitude. Do you ever correspond with him. If W. in P. [Finnegans Wake] is all wrong why does he for ever return to it?" (3: 194). At Joyce's request, Larbaud joined Joyce and Bennett when they met for dinner in January 1931 (3: 211).
- 2. Although the second law of thermodynamics was developed by a number of scientists, including James Clerk Maxwell and Max Planck, it was William Thomson (Lord Kelvin) who brought it to popular consciousness, raising the possibility that the universe was "running down like a clock" (388). Thomson ("Thumpsem" [155.33]), Maxwell ("Maxwell, clark" [130.11]), and Planck ("Splanck!" [505.28]) all appear in the course of Finnegans Wake.

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- 3. As Crosbie Smith and Norton Wise demonstrate, Lord Kelvin believed that only God "could restore the initial sources of energy," effectively regenerating the universe (501). In this (as in his name) Kelvin resembles St. Kevin, at least as he is represented in the final chapter of *Finnegans Wake*, as he bathes in his own filth, firmly believing in the power of "baptism or the regeneration of all man by the affusion of water" (606.11–12): like Kelvin, St. Kevin believes only God can redeem that which is corrupt—in other words, reverse entropy.
- 4. In addition to numerous semi-autobiographical novels set in the Potteries, Bennett frequently referred to himself and his background in his columns and even published autobiographical articles with names such as "The Making of Me" and "My Religious Experience" (Drabble 378).
- 5. For a discussion of the Bennett/Woolf debate, see Drabble 291–94. Ironically, despite their public dispute, there was little if any personal animosity between the two, and Woolf records being strongly affected by Bennett's death, which, like everyone else, she attributed to his having consumed contaminated water (Lee 576).
- 6. In a letter to Harriet Weaver Shaw, Joyce laments the fact that Bennett's remarks were published on the jacket of *Portrait* (3: 109).
- 7. For a discussion of how Bennett was represented in literary satires, see Drabble 289–91.
- 8. As Kelly Anspaugh suggests, "Finnegans Wake is, among infinite other things, a revenge text, a book of getting even" (176). She demonstrates how Virginia Woolf, like others including Wyndham Lewis and Rebecca West, were satirized in Joyce's book.
- 9. Bennett's illness received considerable attention from the news media. The London Times provided updates on his condition daily, and the New York Times put accounts of Bennett's malady on the front page. In fact, the New York Times received "special cables" (Drabble 354) from London about Bennett's illness, its cause and treatment, twice reporting that straw had been placed in the streets to reduce street noise for Bennett's benefit. Both papers attributed Bennett's death to contaminated water that he had consumed in France, and the Evening Standard "was full of details about Bennett, about his American obituaries, about the dangers of drinking water in Paris. His fate was treated as an awful warning to travelers" (354).
- 10. Although many critics seemingly assume that the various cycles represented in the novel are regenerative, critical debate in this area continues. In discussing the cycle of generations, for example, Kathleen Ferris observes:

Finn's sleep in the *Wake* represents, at one level of meaning, the dormant stages of his disease from which he awakens repeatedly, each time in worse condition. He has been changed from wine to vinegar; to alloy from allay; from Brian Boru at Clontarf to Bruyant le Bref at Dungtarf; from Finn to Earwicker to Shem; from Shaun to Juan to Yawn. He is a "human pest cycling (pist!) and recycling (past!) about the sledgy streets, here he was (pust!) again" (99.4). His final transformation will be death. (144)

Thomas Jackson Rice suggests another possibility: that in his works Joyce explores the tension between the theories of evolution and entropy—a tension that can be regarded as that between generation and regeneration (90).

- 11. As Kathleen Ferris demonstrates, Joyce uses "the metaphor of physical filth to represent spiritual corruption" in many of his works (19).
- 12. For a discussion of incest in *Finnegans Wake* see Sheldon Brivic 102–05. See also Shari Benstock 188–89 and Suzette Henke 172, 201.
- 13. In her closing monologue ALP finally seems to recognize HCE's degeneration, commenting, "I thought you the great in all things, in guilt and in glory. You're but a puny" (627.23–24).
- 14. As William York Tindall notes, in Giambattista Vico's La Scienza Nuova, a philosophical work that was to have tremendous influence on Finnegans Wake, a ricorso is "a reflux" that occurs before "the cycle begins again" (8).
- 15. "[C]ommodius vicus of recirculation" did not appear in chapter 1 when it was originally published in *transition*. Joyce apparently added it in 1931, after Bennett's death.
- 16. Bennett refers to Waterloo Road as Trafalgar Street in novels such as *Anna of the Five Towns*, retaining the Napoleonic connotations.
- 17. For an analysis of Joyce's notebooks that indicates that Joyce revised book 1 in 1931 after Bennett's death, see Danis Rose, especially the chronology he establishes, 20–35.
- 18. Although it is Mutt who identifies himself as a stutterer, it is Jute who actually stutters, saying, "What a hauhauhauhaudibble thing" (22).
- 19. That the passage refers to both Boru and HCE is demonstrated by Tindall 43–44. The earlier references to Boru ("Booru" [22]) and his Danish opponent Sitric ("Cedrick") make it clear that on one level it is Boru who defecated in the marsh just as the Russian general does later in the Butt/Taff dialogue

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- (353). That it refers to HCE is made evident by the reference to Humpty Dumpty, a figure frequently identified with HCE.
- 20. As Tindall suggests, "norse" is a combination of nose and arse (44).
- 21. The 1927 version includes "dragon man" but does not include the reference to Jute's "fire defenses" or eating from a "brain pan."
- 22. "Ghinees" also suggests Guinness, Ireland's most popular beer, a dark stout made at the St. James's Gate Brewery in Dublin.
- 23. Joyce underwent eye surgery for the ninth time on 15 May 1930. He was scheduled to have an additional operation in September but postponed it, not seeing his eye doctor again until 1932. By then his "right eye had deteriorated to the point where blindness in it was almost inevitable" (Joyce, *Letters* 2: 636, 670).
- 24. This and the other quotes in this paragraph appear both in *transition* and the final version of *Finnegans Wake*. The fact that Joyce added detail to the passages that precede these particular quotations so that Jute is more Bennett-like make it possible to identify Jute's criticism of Mutt's words with Bennett's criticism of Joyce.
- 25. Mutt and Jute—the writer and the critic—"swop hats" in the 1927 version as well.

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Seamus Heaney's Regionalism

Richard Rankin Russell

Each person in Ulster lives first in the Ulster of the actual present, and then in one or other Ulster of the mind.

-Heaney (Place and Displacement 4)

[W]hile a literary scene in which the provinces revolve around the centre is demonstrably a Copernican one, the task of talent is to reverse things to a Ptolemaic condition. The writer must reenvisage the region as the original point.

—Heaney ("The Regional Forecast" 13)

In ways that are only just now beginning to be realized, the best writers from Philip Hobsbaum's Belfast Group (1963–66), such as Seamus Heaney, Michael Longley, Stewart Parker, and Bernard MacLaverty, have articulated a regional literature that interacted fruitfully with regional literatures all over the British and Irish archipelago, including Scottish, Welsh, and regional English, and with regional writers from America, such as Robert Frost. The literary devolution that comprises the largely untold story of twentieth-century "English" literature suggests the viability of regionalism generally and a decline in the dominance of London-centered literature. The imaginative efforts of a series of Northern Irish writers beginning in the early twentieth century have led to the establishment of a regional, bicultural, and finally trans-cultural literature that has devolved aesthetically, albeit as a special case, from British and Irish literature.

This regional literature can be placed alongside that developing in Scotland, Wales, and parts of England outside the Home Counties, such as northern England. R. P. Draper has recently discussed how, during the course of the twentieth century,

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places like Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle and Hull became much more the regional capitals of a still urban, but no longer [solely a] London-based literary activity. Many of the best English poets came from the regions and maintained a non-metropolitan, or even anti-metropolitan outlook. ("Regional" 161)

We can easily add Belfast to this catalog of regional literary activity in the United Kingdom, although it is an anomaly, geographically detached from the British mainland and profoundly bicultural in a way that no other major British city is, including Glasgow. Although not identified as a specific region in T. S. Eliot's argument about the importance of maintaining regional culture in the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland nonetheless accords with his description of the region or the satellite culture: "the satellite exercises a considerable influence upon the stronger culture; and so plays a larger part in the world at large than it could in isolation" (128). As evidence of this influence of Northern Irish culture on English culture, Neil Corcoran argues that "the Troubles beginning in 1968" have been "the single most influential factor on the subsequent history [...] of contemporary 'English' poetry" (qtd. in Stevenson 255). Far from being provincial, Northern Irish literature is actually regional in an expansive sense of the term, astonishingly plural and cosmopolitan in ways that far surpass some Irish and British literature. Only time will tell if the province will be incorporated into the Republic of Ireland, but for now, its literature exists in a fragile and fascinating moment, redolent with hope for its future.1

Beginning in the 1960s, the Northern Irish poet Seamus Heaney began developing a regionally based poetry by analyzing his literary predecessors in the province, elsewhere in the United Kingdom, and even in the United States, through a series of book reviews and essays. Although Heaney is a powerful literary critic, his criticism has been either largely neglected in favor of his poetry or read primarily to explain his poetry. Thankfully, a countervailing trajectory has recently emerged. For example, Eugene O'Brien has argued that the poet's prose is "central to his developing project" (Searches 10) and should be considered as such, rather than following the usual procedure, which is to see it as "a meta-commentary on his poetry." And in the most recent collection of essays on Heaney's work, two of the contributors specifically defend Heaney's prose criticism as upholding Virginia Woolf's theory of the radical, individual reader and

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as inscribing a space for poetry's authority while nevertheless interacting with major social and ethical questions.²

Through his prose and other work, such as his broadcasts on BBC Northern Ireland, Heaney began conceiving of Northern Ireland as a viable region in which to ground his poetry and anchor his attempts to unify the province's divided inhabitants.3 The current state of Northern Ireland, however, only retains six of the original nine counties from the traditional Irish province of Ulster because of successful Protestant efforts before partition to exclude the other three counties for fear of their Catholic majority population. Thus, counties Donegal, Monaghan, and Cavan became part of the Irish Republic in 1922, while only counties Fermanagh, Antrim, Tyrone, Londonderry, Armagh, and Down formed the new province of Northern Ireland. Heaney has often recognized the contribution of writers from these excluded counties to literature from the North, such as the Donegal poet Cathal Bui Mac Giolla Ghunna (died c. 1756), who wrote in Irish, and the twentieth-century poet Patrick Kavanagh, who grew up in and devoted his early poetry to writing about County Monaghan. Heaney has also drawn on the work of significant regional writers from contemporary Northern Ireland, such as John Hewitt and John Montague, along with authors from Wales, Scotland, England, and America, including R. S. Thomas, Edwin Muir, George Mackay Brown, Norman MacCaig, Hugh MacDiarmid, Sorley Maclean, William Wordsworth, Philip Larkin, Ted Hughes, Thomas Hardy, and Robert Frost. Thus his regionalist project bursts the bounds of the six counties of contemporary Northern Ireland, conceiving of Northern Irish regionalism as transhistorical, transcultural, and transterritorial, inherently fluid and receptive—an implicit riposte to monolithic notions of identity inscribed by religion, culture, and politics in Northern Ireland.

In the early twentieth century, partly because of nostalgia for rapidly dwindling rural areas of England and the continued population shift to cities, the concept of regionalism was invoked in theories about rural English literature, while writers in Northern Ireland began articulating versions of Northern Irish regionalism by the 1940s, as we will see. F.W. Morgan's seminal 1939 article, "Three Aspects of Regional Consciousness," for instance, holds that regionalism is marked by "a developing consciousness of the smaller units of the earth" (qtd. in Keith 4). W. J. Keith argues further, quoting the rural English writer H. J. Massingham, that regionalism attains a specificity in the completeness of its presentation

analogous to a work of art and, moreover, that the region so presented actually is art.⁴ Heaney's artful prose rendering of Northern Ireland as a region, then, deserves critical recognition in its own right. This essay seeks to redress the relative neglect of this important project and to suggest how Heaney's real and imagined region of the North functions as a model for unifying the province's diverse inhabitants.

Northern Irish regional exemplars

In the 1960s, as Heaney was learning to write poetry thoroughly grounded in the actual conditions of Northern Ireland, he interacted not only with other Belfast Group poets but also turned naturally to older literary exemplars from the province. That he was engaged in promoting Northern Irish literature is evident from the influence of "Ulster" writing on him generally, through the Northern Irish literary journals he contributed to in the 1960s and 1970s, and in his recognition of the emergence of other regional literatures across the British and Irish archipelago and even in America. By 1989 he could look back and proclaim, in his suggestively titled essay "The Regional Forecast," that "I have a sense that nowadays the writers on the outskirts know more about one another than ever before and have begun to take cognizance of each other in ways that are fortifying and illuminating" (22).

Michael Parker notes that only a few years after the beginning of the Ulster regionalist movement, Heaney "wrote an extended essay on 'Ulster literary magazines'" in 1962 that brought him into contact with writers such as W. R. Rodgers and John Hewitt, who had "created a poetry out of their local and native background" (36). Four influential Northern writers for Heaney in this regard were Patrick Kavanagh, from Monaghan, part of the historic province of Ulster; John Montague, born in New York but raised in rural County Tyrone, part of present-day Northern Ireland; John Hewitt, born in Belfast; and the novelist and short story writer Michael McLaverty, from Monaghan.

Hobsbaum had so stressed Kavanagh's emphasis on the parochial to the Belfast Group writers that Heaney even recalls Hobsbaum in terms usually associated with the elder Ulster poet: Hobsbaum "emanated energy, generosity, belief in the community, trust in the parochial, the inept, the unprinted" ("Belfast" 29). Heaney would enact Kavanagh's fondness for the parochial by meditating lovingly and intensely on the particular-

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ized objects and landscape of his rural Derry childhood. When asked in the 1960s why he dedicated no early poems to Kavanagh, Heaney replied, "I had no need to write a poem to Patrick Kavanagh; I wrote *Death of a Naturalist*" (qtd. in Parker 32). If those poems testify to the Monaghan poet's influence on Heaney, so do two of his early essays.

In the first of these, "From Monaghan to the Grand Canal: The Poetry of Patrick Kavanagh" (1975), Heaney praises the public quality of Kavanagh's work in articulating a rural Catholic consciousness in aquatic terms he had previously reserved for his own poetry's focus on the imagination in poems such as "The Diviner" and "Personal Helicon" from Death of a Naturalist (1966) and "A Lough Neagh Sequence" and "Bogland" from Door into the Dark (1969):5

There is what I would call an artesian quality about his best work because for the first time since Brian Merriman's poetry in Irish at the end of the eighteenth century and William Carleton's novels in the nineteenth, a hard buried life that subsisted beyond the feel of middle-class novelists and romantic nationalist poets, a life denuded of "folk" and picturesque elements, found its expression. [...] Kavanagh forged not so much a conscience as a consciousness for the great majority of his countrymen, crossing the pieties of a rural Catholic sensibility with the *non serviam* of his original personality, raising the inhibited energies of a subculture to the power of a cultural resource. (116)

Thus Kavanagh's poetry brought submerged Northern Catholicism into public literature and culture, an instructive move for the young Catholic poet from rural Derry, and one he would emulate often in his own verse (though while Kavanagh's poetry often laments the brutality and weariness of rural life, Heaney's generally lauds its life-affirming and renewing aspects, with some important exceptions).

Perhaps more important for Heaney was Kavanagh's elevation of "technique" over "craft":

There is, we might say, more technique than craft in his work, real technique which is, in his own words, "a spiritual quality, a condition of mind, or an ability to invoke a particular condition of mind . . . a method of getting at life."

("From Monaghan to the Grand Canal" 116)

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Kavanagh enabled Heaney to dwell on local landscapes to such a degree that they became mental states as well. Indeed, he sees here the poems of Kavanagh's *Tarry Flynn* as "matter-of-fact landscapes, literally presented, but contemplated from such a point of view and with such intensity that they become 'a prospect of the mind'" (120). While Heaney's early landscape poems, with some notable exceptions such as "Bogland," dwell more on the actual than the abstract, Kavanagh's supple linkage of outer and inner terrain would influence Heaney's later career, especially the poetry that followed *North*.

In 1977, two years after the essay devoted to Kavanagh, Heaney praised him more specifically for his articulation of "parochialism." In "The Sense of Place" he argues that Kavanagh's work was closer to the lives of the majority of Irish people than was Yeats's because of "Kavanagh's fidelity to the unpromising, unspectacular countryside of Monaghan and his rendering of the authentic speech of those parts" (137). Citing Kavanagh's seminal poem "Epic" and his essay "The Parish and the Universe," Heaney argues that he "cherished the ordinary, the actual, the known, the unimportant" (139). For all his intense scrutiny of the local, however, Kavanagh remains on the landscape's surface, and his place names "are denuded of tribal or etymological implications" (140).6

John Montague's poetry, on the other hand, is rife with such implications, and Heaney praises his work for this quality immediately after his discussion of Kavanagh's poetry in "The Sense of Place." Employing the aquatic terminology he typically uses to laud poetry of the highest order, Heaney argues that Montague's place names are "sounding lines, rods to plumb the depths of a shared and diminished culture. They are redolent not just of his personal life but of the history of his people, disinherited and dispossessed" (141). Like Kavanagh, Montague evokes a buried culture in the province, but his exploration goes much deeper, suggesting the acute loss of pagan and Gaelic civilization:

Both Kavanagh and Montague explore a hidden Ulster, to alter Daniel Corkery's suggestive phrase, and Montague's exploration follows Corkery's tracks in a way that Kavanagh's does not. There is an element of cultural and political resistance and retrieval in Montague's work that is absent from Kavanagh's. What is hidden at the bottom of Montague's region is first of all a pagan civilization centred on the dolmen; then a Gaelic civilization centred on the O'Neill inauguration stone at Tullyhogue.⁷ (141)

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Heaney's reading of Montague's sense of place has been critiqued by John Lucas as reductive and as reverting to a rural idyll that rejects the city:

[S]uch a culture is heavily dependent on stock images and attitudes and [...] it thus conspires with the sense of diminishment it wishes to discover. [...] The trap is sprung by what can fairly be regarded as a dangerous myth of dwelling, where that affirms a commitment to "roots" and "stability" and "history" against those who shift about, "Like some poor Arab tribesman and his tent." [...] For this dream of contact with the soil turns into a regressive ruralism which must necessarily regard the city as the antitype of true civilization. (124)

This is a difficult charge to refute. One is tempted to say that Heaney's immersion in the Belfast of the late 1960s and early 1970s, which was rapidly descending into violence, justified his view of the city as "the antitype of true civilization," but of course many sectarian murders were committed in rural parts of the province as well, most notably by the loyalist Protestant gang called the Shankill Butchers in the mid to late 1970s.

Heaney's supposedly "regressive ruralism," however, is grounded in his religious understanding of his native countryside, which forms an essential component of his rural regionalism. This landscape recalls that of the playwright John Synge's Aran Islands, where both in real life and in Synge's plays such as *Riders to the Sea* (1904), islanders easily moved from belief in Catholic rituals to belief in local spirits such as witches. Heaney recalls this syncretistic terrain in his essay "The Poet as a Christian":

There, if you like, was the foundation for a marvelous or magical view of the world, a foundation that sustained a diminished structure of lore and superstition and half-pagan, half-Christian thought and practice. Much of the flora of the place had a religious force, especially if we think of the root of the word religious in *religare*, to bind fast. (604–05)

The allure of the countryside, then, both for Heaney and for Montague as read by Heaney, is its evocation of this syncretistic, half-buried world signified by its very plants and trees. This blend of pagan and Christian rootedness confounds binary attempts to categorize Heaney's regionalism, including those marked by sophisticated theoretical forays into his work. 9

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Not content with registering the influence of two fellow Catholic poets on his own developing sense of regionalism, Heaney concludes "The Sense of Place" with a discussion of the Protestant John Hewitt's poetry, lauding Hewitt for his "bifocal" (147) regionalism in contrast to Montague's "monocular" outlook. To exemplify, Heaney details the significance of their archaeological symbols:

When Montague's vision founds itself on the archaeological, it is on Knockmany Dolmen, on the insular tradition. When Hewitt searches for his primeval symbol, it is also megalithic; "a broken circle of stones on a rough hillside, somewhere," is the destination of his search for a "somewhere," and his note tells us that that somewhere is a refraction of two places. "Circle of stones': for me the archetype of this is the Rollright Stones on the border of Oxfordshire, mingled with the recollection of 'Ossian's Grave,' Glenaan, Co. Antrim." Oxfordshire and Antrim, two fidelities, two spirits that in John Donne's original and active verb, interanimate each other. (147)

Despite Hewitt's cultural Protestantism, his bicultural regionalism was salutary for Heaney as a stateless, Northern Irish writer influenced by both British and Irish cultures.

While Kavanagh advocated the intense local study of a given writer's immediate milieu in a generally Irish context, Hewitt attempted to articulate a viable Ulster regionalism while acknowledging the particular intractability of his province to a vibrant literary culture. For example, in his 1945 essay "The Bitter Gourd," first published in the third issue of Lagan, a short-lived journal of Northern Irish writing that appeared briefly toward the end of World War II, he discusses the regionalism of Wales and Scotland, contrasting their status as "geographical and national entities" (93) with the regions of the West of England and Ulster, which are not as clearly defined. Besides the vexed question of the geographic makeup of the province,

Ulster's position in this island involves us in problems and cleavages for which we can find no counterpart elsewhere in the British archipelago. Scotland has its Lowlands and its Highlands still with shreds and vestiges of historical, linguistic and even religious divergences, but on nothing approaching the scale with which we are faced here. ¹⁰ (94)

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The solution for the current crop of writers in the province, as Hewitt saw it, was to draw on their local surroundings for their art; the Ulster writer "must be a rooted man, must carry the native tang of his idiom like the native dust on his sleeve; otherwise he is an airy internationalist, thistledown, a twig in a stream" (99).

Finally, Hewitt argues that Queen's University in Belfast has a significant role to play in promoting Northern Irish writing. Citing various British university literary groups from the past, including "Marlowe and his fellow pioneers" and "the Auden group" (102), Hewitt notes that these groups constitute a haven for the thoughtful safe from the rampant materialism of society:

The importance of these groups resides, of course, in the bringing together of young keen contemporary minds enjoying for a period some measure of social security and not yet involved in and conditioned by openly economic demands and their superstructure of material ideals.

No notable coteries of this sort have arisen at Queen's, he concludes, which "at various times had its groups, but they have been infrequent, drawing only a tiny membership and producing little work of significance." Within 20 years, the emergence of Philip Hobsbaum's Belfast Group at Queen's would prove the literary potential of Hewitt's call for Queen's to support "the bringing together of young keen contemporary minds." In the meantime, Northern Irish writing would flourish largely based on the work of its professional writers such as Hewitt, who would later review Heaney's first volume, *Death of a Naturalist*, and praise it extensively.¹¹

Peter McDonald asks a question pertinent to the corresponding emergence of Northern Irish literature and Heaney's role in developing his particular concept of regionalism: "Does regionalism give birth to the individual artist, or does the artist create for his community the viable concept of regionalism?" (24). To be sure, Hewitt's regionalism would not have been given nearly the credence it eventually gained had not the province of Northern Ireland been created in 1922. For instance, it took several decades for Hewitt and his coterie of Sam Hanna Bell, John Boyd, Roy McFadden, and other writers to consciously define the parameters of Northern Irish literature, beginning somewhat formally in 1950, with the founding of the New Literary Dinner Club. As Gillian McIntosh

has shown, the forums of the BBC and PEN (Playwrights, Poets, Editors, Essayists, and Novelists) enabled these writers to formally and informally begin articulating their view of Northern Irish literature at least as early as the late 1940s (182).

As Hewitt points out in "The Progress of a Poet," his review of Death of a Naturalist, the final Ulster regionalist influence on Heaney is Michael McLaverty. In McLaverty, who supervised Heaney's teacher training at St. Thomas's Intermediate School, Belfast, in 1962, Heaney found another example of a rooted Catholic Northern Irish writer who, like Kavanagh, also gazed intensely on his parish. Heaney dedicated "Fosterage," the fifth poem in the sequence Singing School from North, to McLaverty, who, the speaker recalls, "fostered me and sent me out, with words / Imposing on my tongue like obols" (Opened Ground 134). In his introduction to McLaverty's Collected Short Stories, Heaney praises him for his "fidelity to the intimate and the local" and "his sense of the great tradition that he works in, his contempt for the flashy and the topical, his love of the universal, the worn grain of unspectacular experience, the well-turned grain of language itself" (7). Like Kavanagh, McLaverty taught Heaney disdain for the ephemeral and respect for the lasting, values that would stand him in good stead as he mostly withheld immediate comment on the violence in the province beginning in the late 1960s. And like Kavanagh's, McLaverty's deep affection for local landscape gave Heaney another example of a Northern Irish writer who successfully developed a rich country of the mind out of a geographic one. Heaney thus concludes his introduction to McLaverty's stories by observing how McLaverty's physical region becomes internalized through loving observation, using the same phrase, "a prospect of the mind," with which he described Kavanagh's contemplation of his landscape in "From Monaghan to the Grand Canal":

There is, of course, a regional basis to McLaverty's world and a documentary solidity to his observation, yet the region is contemplated with a gaze more loving and more lingering than any fieldworker or folklorist could ever manage. Those streets and shores and fields have been weathered in his affections and patient understanding until the contours of each landscape have become a moulded language, a prospect of the mind. (8)

Regional influences beyond Northern Ireland

Heaney also perceived Northern Irish literature as participating in a dialogue with other regional literature of the period. Michael Parker cites a little-known review of R. S. Thomas's first volume of poetry, *The Bread of Truth* (1963), published in *Trench* in June 1964, in which, for example, Heaney enthusiastically praises the Welshness of the elder poet's work:

Welsh religion, Welsh landscape, Welsh characters are the thongs tightening his imagination and intelligence. [...] The physical features of the Welsh hill country and its inhabitants are presented in pungent detail, so that a self-contained world gradually evolves in the imagination. [...] The sensibility that informs this work is instinctive, fermented in the dank valleys of a country imagination. [...] To regard this poet as regional [...] is to blind oneself to the blush of the universal on his gaunt Welsh features. (42)

Heaney is concerned to not diminish Thomas's considerable achievement by describing it negatively as regionalist, which often connotes provincialism and narrowness. That he saw Thomas's distinctive Welsh poetic project as having both particular and universal qualities confirmed his own regionalist program to render specific aspects of Northern Ireland universal.¹²

Norman MacCaig's and Hugh MacDiarmid's Scottish regionalism further confirmed the young poet. Employing "parochial" in a manner reminiscent of Kavanagh's use of the term in "The Parish and the Universe," Parker argues that "No doubt MacCaig's world with its epiphanies spilling easily from local, parochial experience, gave confidence to Heaney as he allowed his bucket to plummet into the well" (44). Heaney also recognized in McCaig's work the connection between poetry and fishing central to his own (as in "Casualty" from Field Work):

He was a great fisherman, master of the cast, of the line that is a lure. And the angler's art—the art of coming in at an angle—is there in his poetry too. He could always get a rise out of the subject. He made it jump beyond itself.¹³ ("Norman MacCaig" 433).

More important than MacCaig, though, in developing Heaney's concept of regionalism was the Scottish poet Hugh MacDiarmid, the

subject of two different Heaney essays. In a review of *The Hugh MacDiar-mid Anthology*, originally published in *Hibernia* in 1972, Heaney explicitly links Wordsworth and MacDiarmid through their common regionalist projects based on everyday language: "both professed a diction that was deliberately at variance with prevalent modes" ("Tradition and an Individual Talent" 195). MacDiarmid incorporates Lallans into his poetry, he stresses, just as Wordsworth incorporated the language of the Cumbrian peasants who lived around him in the Lake District:

Again like the young Wordsworth, MacDiarmid has a sense of an enervating cultural situation—he saw Scottish civilization as damned and doomed by influences from south of the Border—that is intimately linked with his linguistic obsessions. [. . .] Lallans, his poetic Scots language, is based on the language of men, specifically on the dialect of his home district around Langholm in Dumfrieshire, but its attractive gaudiness is qualified by the not infrequent inanities of his English, for he occasionally speaks a language that the ones in Langholm do not know. (195–96)

Praising MacDiarmid's "Water Music" in specifically regional terms for the way in which "the Scots and the Latinate English furl together in a downpour of energy," he argues that in this poem, "the local and the indigenous, which were Joyce's obsession also, are affiliated to oral and instinctive characteristics of the region and the intensity and volubility of the regional diction" (196–97). MacDiarmid's successful fusing of Scots and Latinate English in "Water Music" undoubtedly confirmed in Heaney the validity of the mixed dialects of Northern Irish and Irish English he incorporated in—even made the subject of—several important poems in Wintering Out such as "Broagh," "Nerthus," and "Traditions." 14

In his Oxford lecture on MacDiarmid some two decades later, Heaney again praised the Scottish poet's linguistic contribution to his home country:

he effected a reorientation of attitudes to the country's two indigenous languages, the Scots Gaelic of the Highlands and Islands and the vernacular Scots of the Borders and Lowlands. [...] MacDiarmid also more or less singlehandedly created a literature in one of those languages. ("A Torchlight Procession" 103)

Despite realizing the excessive output of MacDiarmid's poetry and its

unevenness, Heaney clearly recognizes him as laying the groundwork for the great outpouring of Scottish literature in the closing decades of the century:

There is a demonstrable link between MacDiarmid's act of cultural resistance in the Scotland of the 1920s and the literary self-possession of writers such as Alasdair Gray, Tom Leonard, Liz Lochhead and James Kelman in the 1980s and 1990s. (104)

Once again Heaney is implicitly reading his own regionalist work as part of a continuum of devolved literatures expressed in varying languages and dialects throughout the twentieth century in the British and Atlantic archipelago. In 2001, he would look back to his coediting of the poetic anthology *The School Bag* with Ted Hughes in the early 1980s and realize that their approach to collecting poetry from different regions and nations in the archipelago was consistent with the thrust of historian Hugh Kearney's landmark work *The British Isles: A History of Four Nations.* 15

Just as important for Heaney in developing his Ulster regionalist poetry grounded in the particular dialects of his region were the Orcadian Scottish authors George Mackay Brown and Edwin Muir, whose work in An Orkney Tapestry Heaney reviewed in The Listener on 21 August 1969. Michael Parker reads this review as expressing a type of retreat into the recesses of Heaney's mind from the burgeoning violence in the province (78-79), but Heaney's comparisons of the poetry of Brown and Muir to that of the regional English writers William Barnes and Thomas Hardy suggests that he views Scottish, Northern Irish writing, and English literature from outside London as constituting a matrix of regional literature. Additionally, as he attempted to keep his own poetry and Northern Irish poetry generally from being seen as too narrow and negative, especially in light of the accelerating conflict in the province, Heaney may well have identified with what John Holloway has called the "almost visionary hopefulness and exploratory imagination" of Muir's writing from the 1950s (110). If Muir's late verse gave Heaney hope and a widening imaginative compass, Mackay Brown's own anthropological impulse must have confirmed Heaney's continued documentation of traditional crafts in rural Ulster. 16

Heaney recognized that the work of Muir and other regional writers in the British and Irish archipelago suggested a viable third way between the neoromanticism of Dylan Thomas and the "tight formation-flying of

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the Empson/Auden division," as he argued in his later essay, "The Impact of Translation" (40). In that essay he favorably reviews the young British poet Christopher Reid's volume *Katerina Brac*, "written in the voice of an apocryphal Eastern European poet." For Heaney, Reid's volume signifies "the delayed promise, though not the complete fulfillment, of a native British modernism" (41). He bewails the direction English poetry took with the verse of the Movement poets such as "Larkin, Davie, Enright and others, the inheritors in the Empson/Auden line" and argues:

Yet it could be thought a matter of regret that Edwin Muir—the poet who translated Kafka in the 1920s and who witnessed the Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia after the war [...] did not succeed better in bringing the insular/vernacular/British imagination into more traumatic contact with a reality of which *Katerina Brac* is the wistful and literary after-image.

He concludes:

there was a road not taken in poetry in English in this century, a road traveled once by the young Auden and the middle-aged Muir. Further, because we have not lived the tragic scenario which such imaginations presented to us as the life appropriate to our times, our capacity to make a complete act of faith in our vernacular poetic possessions has been undermined. (44)

Heaney is being too hard on himself. For it is precisely in his poetry that we see an "act of faith in our vernacular poetic possessions" through his incorporation of the varying rich dialects of his native province.¹⁷

In a response to the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, which established the conditions for power sharing between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, Heaney would reflect again on the interpenetrations of dialect and culture—this time in the work of regional Scottish writer Sorley Maclean. Speculating on the implications of the phrase "totality of relations" in the Agreement, Heaney suggests the inextricability of the cultures throughout the archipelago:

I thought, for example, of the complexities, religious and cultural, that might be recognised and the extensions that might be suggested if the achievement of Sorley Maclean, a Gaelic-speak-

ing, free Presbyterian, socialist, ex-British soldier poet of the Western Scottish Isles, were to be studied in Ulster schools. ("Unheard Melodies")

Maclean is a perfect example of the intertwining of religious practice, politics, and language in the Hebridean Islands; moreover, his language and religious affiliation as Free Presbyterian would be anomalous but salutary for Northern Ireland, where Ian Paisley's Free Presbyterian Church typically rejects all things associated with "Irishness," such as speaking Gaelic. Heaney has been drawn to Maclean's example for a number of years, and wrote the introduction to a volume of critical essays on him in 1986. 18

A final Scottish influence on Heaney's regionalism is Robert Burns. In a 1997 essay, "Burns's Art Speech," Heaney recalls the beneficial effect of Burns's "To a Mouse" on him as a student. The opening line, "Wee, sleeket, cowran, tim'rous beastie," affirmed Heaney's own vernacular speech:

the word "wee" put its stressed foot down and in one pre-emptive vocative strike took over the emotional and cultural ground, dispossessing the rights of written standard English and offering asylum to all vernacular comers. To all, at least, who hailed from north of a line drawn between Berwick and Bundoran. (378)

Heaney's equation of the province of historic Ulster (Bundoran is a County Donegal village in Ireland close to the border of Northern Ireland) with Scotland is effected through a common vernacular heritage and is one of his clearest expressions of the cultural and literary affinities he sees between Scotland and Ulster. He approvingly recalls the linguistic rightness of Burns's opening line, its

truth to the life of the language I spoke while growing up in mid-Ulster, a language where trace elements of Elizabethan English and Lowland Scots are still to be heard and to be reckoned with as a matter of pronunciation and even, indeed, of politics. (379)

Far from resistant to celebrating the Scottishness of the province, as some of his critics have charged, Heaney has inscribed it occasionally in his poetry, as "The Other Side" from Wintering Out attests. 19

His approval of "To a Mouse" is paired with his delighted reading

of the Donegal Irish poet Cathal Bui Mac Giolla Ghunna's "An Bunnan Bui." Heaney's yoking of these two poems further indicates his perception of himself as a regional poet and displays the kind of linguistic reconciliation he finds rife in literature from the province. Mac Giolla Ghunna, he says, was important for him because he wrote using the Ulster Irish Heaney had learned in school:

[He was] [s]ignificant because he was a Northern voice and part of a group of Ulster poets [including Seamus Dall Mac Cuarta and Art MacCumhaigh] whose work, like Burns's, was sustained out of the past by a long and learned literary tradition. [...] Their words and intonations belonged to an Ulster Irish in which I felt completely at home, since it was the Ulster version of the language that had been taught in Derry.

("Burns's Art Speech" 384)

He compares his experience reading these Ulster Irish poets to Hewitt's when the elder poet read the Rhyming Weavers, "those local bards of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries who wrote in the Ulster Scots vernacular and who produced in Hewitt 'some feeling that, for better or worse, they were my own people" (384). Finally, after translating from the Irish of "An Bunnan Bui," Heaney notes that "it's another source of satisfaction to me that och reappears at the phonetic centre of this poem in the word loch and the word deoch—which happens to mean 'drink' in Irish" (386). This reappearance points

toward a future that is implicit in the mutually pronounceable elements of the speech of Planter and Gael. Even if we grant the deeply binary nature of Ulster thinking about language and culture, we can still try to establish a plane of regard from which to inspect the recalcitrant elements of the situation and reposition ourselves in relation to them. And that plane, I believe, can be reliably projected from poems and poetry.

Despite his unfortunate recourse to the binary terms "Planter and Gael," which reinforces the pervasive view of a province torn between competing cultures, Heaney is to be commended for his artistic regionalist urging of a transcultural linguistic and literary unity across the historic province of Ulster, which has always been the essential ground of any larger cultural and political reconciliation for him.²⁰

Two other and somewhat surprising poets who confirmed Heaney in his regionalist aesthetic were Wordsworth and Hughes-English poets whose work Heaney convincingly reappropriates as regionalist because of their geographic locations far from the Home Counties and their commitment to local dialect.²¹ We have seen above in his first essay on MacDiarmid how favorably Heaney looked upon Wordsworth for employing the language of the common man to ward off the pernicious cultural influence of English verse far south of the Lake District.²² But Hughes's example would prove even more powerful for Heaney. He lauds Hughes's incorporation of his heavy native West Yorkshire dialect into his poetry in his lecture "Englands of the Mind." This talk concerns how Hughes, Geoffrey Hill, and Philip Larkin "treat England as a region-or rather treat their region as England—in different and complementary ways" (151).23 The "desire to preserve indigenous traditions, to keep open the imagination's supply line to the past [...] to perceive in these a continuity of communal ways, and a confirmation of an identity which is threatened—all this is signified by language." Heaney particularly seems to approve of Hughes's language, whose

sensuous fetch, its redolence of blood and gland and grass and water, recalled English poetry in the fifties from a too suburban aversion of the attention from the elemental; and the poems beat the bounds of a hidden England in streams and trees, on moors and in byres. (153)

His articulation of Hughes's evocation of a "hidden England" in this May 1976 lecture anticipates his articulation of Kavanagh's and Montague's exploration of a "hidden Ulster" in his January 1977 lecture "The Sense of Place," already discussed. These talks reflect Heaney's concern with the subterranean in this period, often expressed through his desire to burrow into the depths of his mind in poems such as "North," the title poem of his 1975 collection, or through his fascination with the "bog bodies" found in northern Europe in poems such as "The Tollund Man" from Wintering Out and "Punishment" and other bog poems in North. Heaney's recognition of a "hidden England" and a "hidden Ulster" signals the subversive nature of his regionalist ethos and his growing awareness of how the regional poetry in the British and Irish archipelago represented a powerful direction for poetry in the English language. As he notes in his conclusion to "Englands of the Mind," "The loss of imperial power,

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the failure of economic nerve, the diminished influence of Britain inside Europe, all this has led to a new sense of the shires, a new valuing of the native English experience" (169).²⁵

Finally, a major transatlantic regionalist influence on Heaney's developing regional aesthetic has been the American poet Robert Frost. Rachel Buxton's recent study of Frost's influence on Heaney and Paul Muldoon carefully traces Heaney's reading of Frost's poetry, starting at Queen's University under Laurence Lerner.26 Heaney's interest in Frost was confirmed by Hewitt, whose essays Heaney read as a graduate student at Queen's when he was writing his extended essay on Ulster literary magazines in 1962, mentioned at the beginning of this article. In "The Bitter Gourd" Hewitt notices the historic similarities between Northern Ireland and New England but then argues that each region's cultural conditions have changed so much that comparisons are not fruitful. And yet, in the conclusion of "The Bitter Gourd," he cites Frost, in particular his "rural portraits," "his avoidance of ornament and rhetoric," and his "unhurried and sinewy wisdom" (103). After suggesting the applicability of Frost's "The Gift Outright" to the situation in Northern Ireland, Hewitt concludes:

some of us [...] are endeavouring to recreate that story, that art, that enchantment, drawn from and firmly rooted in what Ulster was and is, and playing our parts in helping to make her, what first in fitful glimpses but now more and more by a steady light, we realize she should and can become. (104)

Heaney has also recalled how Frost's "credentials as a farmer poet" showed in his poetry: "how forkfuls of hay were built upon a wagonload for easy unloading later, when they have to be tossed down from underfoot" ("Above the Brim" 86). Surely Heaney's own portrayals of rural life in poems such as "Digging" obtain something of their documentary immediacy from his immersion in Frost's clear-eyed farming poems (as well as his own immersion in the life of his family's farm). As he says in "Above the Brim" about the "grim accuracy" of Frost's poem "Out, Out—," "I was immediately susceptible to its documentary weight and did not mistake the wintry report of what happened at the end for the poet's own callousness." In her brief discussion of Heaney's terming Frost a "farmer poet" in "Above the Brim," Edna Longley argues that this phrase "places Frost between Kavanagh, more genuinely a farmer, and Hughes, then more exclusively a poet. This fits Heaney's own inside/

outside relation to the environment he evokes or constructs" ("Atlantic's Premises" 270–71). This construction of Heaney as insider/outsider captures the spirit of such early poems as "Digging" and suggests the way he has drawn on his regional influences yet reconfigured them for his own poetic and cultural purposes to offer an imagined Northern Ireland where disparate religious and cultural groups might meet and engage in productive encounters.

The ethics of Heaney's regionalism

Heaney's ongoing regionalist project retrieves unifying cultural elements, particularly dialects and languages, from the landscapes of his long-divided province and other regions. His "descriptions of place," as Eugene O'Brien argues, thus become "gestures towards an ethical revelation or unveiling" (*Place of Writing* 159). Heaney's artful geographic explorations, that is, carry an implicit ethical charge: landscape functions as a repository of cultural and religious signifiers that must be read closely to determine how regionalism has powerful and potentially liberating effects on cultural consciousness.

As a relatively recent and largely artificial political entity, Northern Ireland's region status has been questioned but ably defended. For example, as evidence of the province's uniqueness as a region, John Wilson Foster argues that "Ulster is distinguished by its inability to decide whether it is primarily a region of Ireland or a region of Britain. It is of course both, a fact that has yet to assume unique cultural form" (291). Edna Longley compellingly argues that "Northern Ireland is potentially a diversified European region where you can live in three places at once (Ireland/Britain/'Ulster')—a liberating condition—not a place that fails to be two other places" ("Multi-Culturalism" 43). Because of Heaney's rendering of an actual yet imagined province steeped in English, Scottish, Irish, and Northern Irish culture, his prose explorations of regionalism offer an important paradigm of rapprochement for a place that is still beset with cultural and political conflict.

Notes

1. Scholars of Irish literature have been considerably reluctant to discuss the existence of something called Northern Irish literature, by and large for very good reasons. Primary among these is probably the desire to assert Irish lit-

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erature as a distinct entity over against British literature, a natural desire given the centuries of British domination over Irish colonists and given the past tendency by British and American scholars to call such authors as Yeats and Joyce British. Northern Irish literature, with its plurality of styles and cultural implications, complicates the picture of Irish literature fruitfully, but this possibility is seldom admitted. It is treated as a special, disturbing center of literary activity: many Irish literary scholars tend to suspect that literature from the political province of Northern Ireland is linked inextricably with the conflict there and that once the conflict peters out, so will the literature. But as this essay demonstrates, Northern Irish literature has a deep-rooted existence that easily antedates the current conflict and should eclipse it.

- 2. See Sidney Burris and Michael Baron, respectively.
- 3. See my essay "Imagining a New Province" for an extended exploration of Heaney's forays into radio in this regard.
- 4. Massingham writes: "a specific quality manifests itself in the complete presentation of a region, in precisely the same way as it does in a work of art. A region thus presented is a work of art" (81; qtd. in Keith 5).
- 5. See Opened Ground 12, 14, 29-35, and 41 for the texts of these poems.
- 6. See too Heaney's essay "The Placeless Heaven: Another Look at Kavanagh," where he argues that Kavanagh's "early Monaghan poetry gives the place credit for existing, assists at its real topographical presence, dwells upon it and accepts it as the definitive locus of the given world" (4).
- 7. But Kavanagh's influence is much stronger on Heaney than it has been on Montague. Michael Allen persuasively argues that Kavanagh has been largely rejected by Montague in favor of a supposedly larger cosmopolitanism, but Heaney has stayed faithful to Kavanagh's parochial vision: "Heaney, on the other hand, has never shown any doubt about the social and artistic validity of his parish" (36).
- 8. See Proinsias MacCana for an explanation of the origins of this syncretism. He argues that the remarkable conservatism of Irish tradition and literature was able to continue after the introduction of Christianity because of this assimilative aspect of Irish ideology: "The subtle *modus vivendi* which had evolved during the first century and a half of the Christian mission [...] permitted the complementary coexistence of two ideologies, one explicitly Christian, the other implicitly and essentially pagan" (58).
- 9. One recent example is Andrew Auge's attempt to import the distinction between arborescent and rhizomatic structures drawn by the theorists Gilles

Deleuze and Felix Guattari into a discussion of Heaney's regional ethos. Auge, citing Deleuze and Guattari's A Thousand Plateaus, notes that "the aborescent signifies centralized hierarchical systems that privilege continuity and filiation," while the rhizomatic "constitutes an a-centered, non-hierarchical, proliferating multiplicity" (272). Auge argues that Heaney's "aspiration toward an arborescent state of organic connectedness is repeatedly frustrated by disruptive encounters with the rhizomatic." As evidence he cites the uncontrollable, ambiguous, and unsettling qualities of poems from Death of a Naturalist, such as the title poem and "Personal Helicon," which threaten the fixity and hierarchy of poems such as "Digging" (272-74). But as Heaney's own prose and poetry make clear, he moves easily between the "arborescent" and the "rhizomatic" and actually obtains a certain groundedness from the profusion and variety of lore, myth, and religion attached to his local landscape. His work collapses the distinction between these two theoretical terms, which thus do not shed much light on his holistic regional worldview, an outlook that anchors him all the more firmly in his particularized landscape precisely through its multiplicity of meanings, which he adroitly negotiates and variously claims in several passages from "The Poet as Christian."

- 10. Hewitt did, however, perceive correspondences to Ulster's anomalous political situation with other situations worldwide—for example, French Quebec's position within Canada. See John Wilson Foster's thoughtful assessment of Hewitt's regionalism and its implications for current considerations of Northern Irish identity. Foster draws a fascinating comparison not between Northern Ireland and French Quebec as Hewitt does, but between Northern Ireland and the Canadian West, following George Melnyk's 1981 book Radical Regionalism. Foster argues that just as the Canadian West has been oppressed by "the official Anglo-French Canadian cultures," so too has Ulster been penalized by "the twin psychological colonialisms of Irish nationalism and British nationality that have falsified their consciousness and diverted them from the true task of self-realization" (294).
- 11. See Hewitt's "The Progress of a Poet" for a lengthy encomium on Heaney's early poetry in terms that recall Hewitt's own conception of regionalism. In my essay "Imagining a New Province" I discuss the contours of Hewitt's review (140). Heather Clark points out that Hewitt's poetry anticipates Heaney's in its "settings, moods, and poetic language," but notes "readers have come to associate [these aspects] almost exclusively with Heaney" (123).
- 12. For a helpful discussion of Thomas's regionalism, see Barbara Hardy 93-100.
- 13. See too Heaney's approval in "The Regional Forecast" of how MacCaig's regionally particular poems attain universality:

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His deceptively simple late poems are testing the echo of the universe as authentically as even a persecuted poet could manage to. [...] But his skill in pretending—even to himself—to be a modest inscriber of glosses should not blind his native audience or any other audience to the modernity of his achievement in these lyrics which sing with the constancy and high nervousness of barbed wire on a moorland. (23)

- 14. See Opened Ground 55 and 64 for the text of "Broagh" and "Nerthus." See Wintering Out 31-32 for the text of "Traditions."
- 15. Heaney points out that Kearney's "Britannic," not "British" approach to history is salutary and inclusive, since it appropriately decenters British history and articulates it as a devolving process:

"Britannic" works like a cultural wake-up call and gestures not only towards the past but also towards an imaginable future. Without insistence or contention, "Britannic" is a reminder of much that the term "British" manages to occlude. "Britannic" allows equal status on the island of Britain to Celt and Saxon, to Scoti and Cymri, to Maldon and Tintagel, to Beowulf and the Gododdin, and so it begins to repair some of the damage done by the imperial, othering power of "British." In fact, one way of describing the era of devolution is to think of it as the moment when Britain went Britannic.

("Through-Other Places" 411-12).

16. Holloway specifically notes this quality in the Orcadian author's work:

Brown is clearly thinking in terms of documenting the distinctive society of which he writes. His vivid individualization is in part a kind of social study or very superior kind of literary reportage, with analogues in the fields of journalism, the TV or radio feature, and the documentary film. (111)

17. "The Impact of Translation" suggests a major reason why Heaney has been so drawn to the work of Eastern European poets such as Osip Mandelstam, Miroslav Holub, and Leos Janacek—because he finds in them the same sort of poetic regionalist ethos that he does in Northern Irish, Scottish, English regionalist, and Welsh poetry. As one brief example, see his two-page introduction to his translation of Janacek's Diary of One Who Vanished, where he notes his replacement of "fledglings" with "scaldies" and the "tree in the hedge" with "boor tree"—an Ulster Scots term. Additionally, as Alan Robinson has ably pointed out in his discussion of Heaney's "increasing affinity with East European writers in exile," the poet "admires them" not so much for "their refusal to succumb to the pressures of a totalitarian regime, but instead [...] [for]

champion[ing] the illusion of individual autonomy enshrined in art's 'free state of image and allusion'" (123).

18. In his introduction Heaney notes that he drew on Maclean as an early example of a poet uneasy about his role as author and citizen. As evidence of this dilemma he cites a Maclean quatrain reflecting on his decision finally not to fight in the Spanish Civil War:

"I who avoided the sore cross / and agony of Spain, / what should I expect or hope, / what splendid prize to win?" Such lines were both sustenance and example to somebody hugging his own secret uneases about the way a poet should conduct himself at a moment of public crisis—for I first read them in the days of the heavy bombing campaign in Belfast, a town I had left in order to make some more deliberate commitment to the life of poetry. (2)

- 19. In "The Other Side" Heaney recalls the family's Presbyterian neighbor in a memorable group of lines that evoke his cultural and religious Scottishness: "His brain was a whitewashed kitchen / hung with texts, swept tidy / as the body o' the kirk" (Opened Ground 60).
- 20. Helpful treatments of the development and devolution of twentieth-century Scottish literature are available in David Hewitt's "Scoticisms and Cultural Conflict," Ursula Kimpel's "Beyond the Caledonian Antisyzygy," R. P. Draper's "Regional, National, and Post-Colonial (1)," and Robert Crawford's enormously far-ranging and thoughtful *Devolving English Literature*, which focuses on Scottish literature as his case study. Kimpel is especially helpful for obtaining an overview of the contributions to Scottish literature by Muir, MacDiarmid, Sorley MacLean, MacCaig, and Edwin Morgan.
- 21. Additionally, the influence of Thomas Hardy as an exemplary regionalist for Heaney cannot be underestimated. In recalling his early reading in poetry, Heaney has noted the sterility and removed quality of much of the literature he explored at that time: "somehow the world of print was like the world of proper and official behavior among strangers. [...] There was no dirt on your boots and you had washed your hands" (Preface xvii). As he thankfully recalls, "It was not until I read the novels of Thomas Hardy in my teens that what was actual at home and what was actually in print encountered [each other] inside my head." See also Heaney's Richard Ellmann lecture, "The Place of Writing," where he briefly discusses Hardy country and the way "the Hardy birthplace embodies the feel of a way of life native to the place. It suggests a common heritage, an adherence to the hearth world of Wessex" (21).
- 22. See also J. H. Alexander's short but suggestive essay "Wordsworth, Regional

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or Provincial?" in which he argues that Wordsworth abhorred provinciality and instead achieved a "profound regionalism which breaks free of spatial and temporal restrictions to offer a radical challenge to *metropolitan* complacencies, snobberies, and denials of true life" (25).

23. Larkin is increasingly perceived as a regional or provincial writer in the most enabling sense of those terms. See for example Draper's "Philip Larkin: Provincial Poet" and Robert Crawford's discussion of Larkin in *Devolving English Literature* (271–82). Crawford argues that Larkin's "provincialism" (not in Kavanagh's negative sense of the term) was influential in Heaney's development as a regional writer:

Hull gave Larkin a valued provincial status as a place that can only be reached, in the language of his poem "Here," by "Swerving" aside from the main flow of the traffic, and this provincial status of Larkin's was to be of use to such writers as Seamus Heaney, able to see Larkin as one of the modern English poets "now possessed of that defensive love of their territory which was once shared only by those poets whom we might call colonial—Yeats, MacDiarmid, Carlos Williams." By seeing Larkin as, in some sense, a "colonial" writer, Heaney is able both to identify and compete with Larkin, the poet of "English nationalism" (Heaney, "Englands of the Mind" 150–51, 167). If Larkin's "English nationalism" is really very much of a provincial variety, that makes him all the closer to the Northern Ireland—born Heaney.

(Crawford 276-77)

- 24. For the text of "North," see *Opened Ground* 98–99; for the text of "The Tollund Man," see *Opened Ground* 62–63; for the text of "Punishment" and other bog poems from *North* such as "Bog Queen," "The Grauballe Man," "Strange Fruit," and "Kinship," see *Opened Ground* 112–13, 108–09, 110–11, 114, and 115–19, respectively.
- 25. Edna Longley, arguing that Heaney's *North*, published the year before, reifies and mystifies the rituals of Irish republicanism, reads this lecture as a manifestation of Heaney's hidden nationalism. She sees that Heaney's remark about Hughes's "hidden England" recalls Daniel Corkery's nationalistic study *The Hidden Ireland*, but she infers from that reference that Heaney

encourages in Hughes ideas of cultural recovery similar to those associated with a particular form of Irish nationalism. [...] Heaney [...] restores to England, via Northern Ireland, nineteenth-century ethno-critical concepts. In particular, his response to Hughes as Saxon/Protestant Other disregards the historical contingencies (post-war, post-

religious, post-industrial) that engender and inform Hughes's myth. This reproduces the Jacobite a-historicity that conditions Heaney's own thinking about Northern Ireland.

("Poetics of Celt and Saxon" 82, 83)

This reading of Heaney's lecture does not recognize its place in the context of his clear approval of other regional literatures. This approval may well be because "Heaney is as alert as Hewitt (for complementary reasons) to those aspects of postwar England that bespeak imperial decline and the dismantling of Protestant Britishness" (83), but Heaney's regionalist ethos, while it may celebrate Britain's imperial decline, is more oriented toward unifying the disparate communities in the province and often recognizes "Protestant Britishness" as an aspect of his Ulster inheritance.

26. See Buxton 39–110 for her thoughtful and persuasive account of Frost's influence on Heaney.

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Although Ian McEwan's recent best seller Saturday maintains throughout a conspicuous air of up-to-the-minute internationalism, that impression turns out to be somewhat misleading. In fact, in its broad outlines the book adheres to a long-familiar insular paradigm: the Condition of England novel. Like the encompassing novel genre itself, this subgenre resists strict definition. However, the preeminent Victorian exemplars, like Disraeli's Sybil (1845), Gaskell's North and South (1855), and Dickens's Hard Times (1854), share certain distinguishing features: they focus on landmark movements in the society of their time, such as rampant industrialization and urbanization, and their action often involves weighty public events. Typically, these hinge on class conflicts: strikes or other types of friction between owners and their workforce. Whatever the authors' explicit political allegiances, their novels, broadly speaking, project a liberal vision, manifesting a compassionate concern with the lives not only of the most privileged but also of the most oppressed members of British society. While such Victorian exemplars may now seem dated, the template itself has been repeatedly pressed into service by writers of the ensuing century and a half, from Edwardians like E. M. Forster to moderns like Martin Amis, William Boyd, Zadie Smith, and, not least, Ian McEwan.

Saturday is not the first work by McEwan to have been identified as a Condition of England novel,¹ though it is the one that most strikingly fits the category. Concerning the shift in his imaginative gestalt that coincided with the writing of *The Child in Time* (1987), McEwan has said:

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From then on, I've never really been interested in anything other than trying to find connections between the public and the private, and exploring how the two are in conflict, how they sometimes reflect each other, how the political invades the private world. (qtd. in Louvel 10)

Such an exploration emerges vividly in Saturday, where the protagonist Henry Perowne's customary private composure is repeatedly tested by tremors from the public realm. While the book's action unfolds in an England that has long outlived the Industrial Revolution, it displays a number of elements linking it with its Victorian forebears. It focuses on an urban setting epitomizing contemporary English life, and it refers repeatedly to a public event of signal importance—the massive rally opposing war in Iraq. Perowne, though not a captain of industry, is an eminent neurosurgeon who heads a firm of medical associates. And as in its Victorian counterparts, the pivotal conflict in the novel pits members of the elite against a representative of the marginalized, the derelict Baxter. Obviously, however, McEwan's England is not the England of Dickens or Gaskell; the intervening years have drastically reconfigured the nation's socioeconomic map. My aims in what follows are to provide a perspective on what the Condition of England mode has become in McEwan's masterly hands and to assess what remains of the liberal vision that once inspired Saturday's illustrious predecessors.

As a writer whose earlier work has sometimes involved French, German, and Italian settings, Ian McEwan has an honest claim to the label cosmopolitan. Although geographically more confined, Saturday too displays a global reach. This is intimated early on by the book's epigraph, drawn from a well-known text by an American writer: Saul Bellow's Herzog. It runs, in part:

Well, for instance, what it means to be a man. In a city. In a century. In transition. In a mass. Transformed by science. Under organized power. Subject to tremendous controls. In a condition caused by mechanization. After the late failure of radical hopes.

The reader infers that McEwan's narrative will respond to the global sweep of Bellow's survey; though its venue will be London rather than Herzog's New York, and its century not Herzog's twentieth but the dawning twenty-first, it too promises to deal with universal questions, above all "what it means to be a man."

Henry Perowne, the key witness for that inquiry, lives in central London with his wife Rosalind, a legal expert attached to a newspaper, and his teenage son Theo, an aspiring and talented blues guitarist. His daughter Daisy is a prize-winning poet; his father-in-law, the venerable but splenetic John Grammaticus, has himself had a long and distinguished poetic career. In their almost comically formidable panoply of professional skill, literary and artistic distinction, and affluence, the Perowne entourage hardly seems a typical family, yet the most prominent American reviews have extolled their mode of life as exemplary, even normative. According to Michiko Kakutani in the New York Times, "Mr. McEwan has not only produced one of the most powerful pieces of post-9/11 fiction yet published, but also fulfilled that very primal mission of the novel: to show how we—a privileged few of us, anyway—live today." Kakutani's dashes bracket a telltale contradiction: what her all-inclusive "we" actually denotes is the finely filtered transatlantic audience for "superior" fiction and journalism. For Michael Dirda, in the Washington Post, the Perownes are normative in an even more culturally overdetermined fashion: "Clearly, the Perownes represent the very flower of Western civilization—decent, thoughtful, productive, cultivated, deeply, fundamentally good." And Zoe Heller, in another Times review, sees Henry Perowne in similar terms as preserving the core values of "our" civilization:

His day is spent shuttling from one privileged, embattled sanctuary to another. . . . But McEwan is not interested here in satirizing yuppie solipsism. . . . In lieu of any larger social cohesion, McEwan suggests, such private joys, carved out from the clamorous world, are what most sustain us. They are our fleeting glimpses of utopia; the ancient ideals of caritas and community lived in microcosm.

Once again, the universalized "us" turns out to be a fastidiously screened sampling: the flowers of civilization, not its rank, festering weeds, whose proliferation defeats "any larger social cohesion." Boycotting the "clamorous world," we find our collective salvation by taking refuge in the hermetic Elysium of the cultured.

Why such American literati might so readily identify with the Perownes, McEwan's haut-bourgeois, echt British clan, has much to do with the historical time and locale in which the narrative is poised ("In a century. In a city"). Kakutani's placement of the book in the category

of post-9/11 fiction rings true; the ambit here is nothing if not topical. The Saturday in question, indeed, threatens to be Henry Perowne's personal 9/11, bringing with it a convulsive disruption of his domestic space. Such a development has precedents in McEwan's earlier fiction; as Nick Rennison has written, "One of McEwan's persistent themes is the intrusion of brutal, inescapable reality into comfortable lives" (110). Here, however, the intrusion patently echoes the brutality of still-smoldering public catastrophe. The terrorist attacks on New York and Washington are recalled early in Saturday by the flaming airplane Perowne sights upon his premature awakening; and while Perowne's fears of an imminent strike against London prove groundless, they betoken the contemporary drift toward paranoia, an undertow that is global in its repercussions. The initial penetration of English airspace by putative hostiles (the aircraft's crew are mysterious foreigners) is proleptic of the later, deadly serious penetration of Perowne's private space by a home-grown hostile, an event that threatens the violent sexual penetration of Perowne's daughter Daisy.2

If the narrative unfolds within English confines, its relevance persistently overflows those limits, confirming what Benedict Anderson has called "nationalism's undivorcible marriage to internationalism" (207). The discursive tension between nation and globe permeates Saturday. In this respect the novel strongly recalls a work of nonfiction published the year before, Free World, by the English political analyst Timothy Garton Ash. (The two authors enjoy a bond of mutual mentorship; there are gracious acknowledgments of the help of "Tim Garton Ash" appended to several of McEwan's novels, Saturday included, and Garton Ash for his part lists McEwan among the "potent array of critical intelligences" who read Free World in draft [272].) Garton Ash qualifies as a premier exponent of early twenty-first-century liberalism, an ethos (as the title of his book suggests) bent on looking beyond entrenched national boundaries. Like the Roman god Janus, he argues, contemporary Britain has more than one face-four faces, in fact, as opposed to the god's mere two: "The back and front faces can be labeled Island and World; the face on the left says Europe and that on the right America" (15). In formulating a wise course of action for a postimperial Britain, Garton Ash is principally concerned with the left and right faces. What he advocates is a nuanced double regard, gazing at once across the Channel toward continental Europe and across the Atlantic toward the United States, without according primacy to either tie. Like McEwan a guarded admirer of Prime Minister Tony Blair,3 Garton

Ash commends what he calls the "Blair bridge project" for charting such a course, founding itself "instinctively, but also rationally, on the very nature of Janus Britain" (44) and thus continually "trying to pull America and Europe together" (45). In its fictive sphere, Saturday undertakes a comparable bridge project, establishing multiple filaments linking the Perownes to both continents. On the day when Perowne plays squash and later performs surgery with his American colleague and friend, the anesthesiologist Jay Strauss, his daughter Daisy and his father-in-law Grammaticus arrive from France, where both are based. And the future trajectories of the two Perowne children neatly maintain the Janus equilibrium: while Toby will go off to the United States to showcase his gifts as a musician, Daisy will be reunited with her Italian boyfriend Giulio, whose child (a prospective avatar of the European Community) she is carrying.

But while his family could be called globalized, Perowne solidly identifies himself with his native, enisled society. The book may raise the question "what it means to be a man," but that question still is formulated implicitly in familiar national terms: what does it mean, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, to be an Englishman? An illuminating correlative for that inquiry is provided by another Condition of England novel written just under a century earlier, E. M. Forster's Howards End (1910).4 Like Saturday, Forster's text focuses on a small circle of characters, generating insights into the current form and pressure of English society. The pair of début de siècle Condition narratives might be thought of as matching bookends bracketing the eventful English twentieth century. Each proposes as a central concern the survival of English civilization in a time of crisis, when that civilization is either shadowed (as in Howards End) or direly perturbed (as in Saturday) by forces inimical to it. Both focus on a family group representing the flower of that civilization: the Schlegel sisters, Margaret and Helen, and their brother Toby in Howards End; the Perownes in Saturday. In both works the presiding group is challenged by sudden contact with a trespassing other from a subaltern social stratum: the struggling clerk Leonard Bast in Forster, the marauding hooligan Baxter in McEwan. And both feature a house as a key thematic locus: Howards End itself, the bucolic site that comes to serve the Schlegels as a sanctum of cultured enjoyment and affection, and the Fitzrovia residence that plays an equivalent role for the Perownes.

Just as Garton Ash's Free World constitutes a companion piece for Saturday, so too there is an influential, contemporaneous work of social

analysis that bears an intimate relation to Forster's novel: a 1909 book called, aptly, The Condition of England, by the Liberal politician C. F. G. Masterman. In his introduction to a 1960 reprint of that volume, James Boulton speaks of Masterman's "debt to [Matthew] Arnold" (xiv), and indeed an Arnoldian logic informs both the argument of Masterman's book and its structure, which by and large follows the tripartite analysis based on social class ("barbarians," "philistines," and "populace") that Arnold deploys in Culture and Anarchy. Repeatedly, Masterman invokes points made by Arnold, including the fundamental one concerning the dissonance between private opulence and public penury painfully observable in London (23). Here the affinity between Masterman and Forster is unmistakable, since the liberal vision dramatically enacted in Howards End has equally firm Arnoldian underpinnings. In Two Cheers for Democracy Forster says of Arnold that he "is of all the Victorians most to my taste: a great poet, a civilized citizen, and a prophet who has managed to project himself into our present troubles, so that when we read him now he seems to be in the room" (197). In Howards End Arnold is very visibly in the room. The Arnoldian aspiration "to see life steadily and see it whole," which according to Peter Widdowson "expresses what 'Culture', in its full Arnoldian sense, means for [Forster]" (66), acts as an imperative for the novel's paramount consciousness, Margaret Schlegel."It is impossible," the narrator cautions, "to see modern life steadily and see it whole," but he adds that Margaret "had chosen to see it whole" (165). Her comprehensiveness of vision manifests itself as "a continual and sincere response to all that she encountered in her path through life" (25).

Somewhat unexpectedly, Matthew Arnold has also managed to project himself into the troubles of McEwan's twenty-first century London. But seeing life whole, let alone steadily, becomes a well-nigh insuperable task for McEwan's latter-day protagonist, though his responsiveness to life recalls Margaret's. The narrative dwells fondly throughout on Perowne's individual angle of vision—indeed, literal keenness of sight is a sine quanon for his professional success—yet his vision, for all its impressive amplitude, inevitably falls short of the Arnoldian gold standard. (Defective vision enters as a motif in the opening pages of the novel, where Perowne ludicrously misdiagnoses the distressed aircraft first as a meteor, then as a comet.) For all that, the ideal itself still exerts an insistent pressure. McEwan's protagonist too is engaged in a daily quest for an Arnoldian "sweetness and light"; and in McEwan as in Forster that quest is defined

by an effort to achieve balance and clarity in private life. It is a revered Victorian text, Arnold's "Dover Beach," that crystallizes the central values both of Forster's Edwardian novel and McEwan's post-9/11 one, where it is quoted in full at the crux of the action.5 The poem appeals for a withdrawal from the deceptive, strife-ridden, massified modern scene. As a refuge from the collective angst, it advances cherished humanistic alternatives: domestic intimacy, fidelity between individual lovers, what McEwan himself in interviews has called "the small print of private life" (Miller). "It is private life," says the narrator of Howards End, "that holds out the mirror to infinity; personal intercourse, and that alone, that ever hints at a personality beyond our daily vision" (91). The conclusion of Howards End, which presents an extended Schlegel family group clustered at its rural retreat, establishes the sanctity of personal bonds as a redoubt against the onslaught of public forces looming, like London, in the near distance. Forster's Edwardian rhetoric is a far cry from McEwan's more measured, contemporary idiom, but the conclusion of Saturday affirms a homologous set of preferences, vindicating the embattled private realm against the importunities of public turmoil.

Still, despite their common Arnoldian heritage, the overall impressions the two books leave are profoundly different. During the near-century separating them the condition of England has been radically altered, and so, inescapably, has the Condition of England novel. At the end of Saturday Perowne muses on the vulnerability that has, since the more secure times in which Forster wrote, come to aggravate the plight in which he and his fellow townspeople find themselves:

London, his small part of it, lies wide open, impossible to defend, waiting for its bomb, like a hundred other cities. . . . A hundred years ago, a middle-aged doctor standing at this window in his silk dressing gown, less than two hours before a winter's dawn, might have pondered the new century's future. February 1903. You might envy this Edwardian gent all he didn't yet know. (276)

While lying wide open might in less ominous times denote a relaxed, even erotic receptiveness that could counter insularity, openness here has more sinister overtones, giving urbanites like Perowne the sense of being sickeningly at risk.⁶ The note of global trepidation is, in a different register, also sounded in Garton Ash's *Free World*. Globalization, according

to Garton Ash, is not only "a hard economic and technical process" but also "what the poet W. H. Auden called a 'mind-event." (132), so that developments anywhere can infringe on Londoners' complacent sense of their world: "A shot fired in Kashmir can hit Putney, through the Ahmadi community in Gressenhall Road. Global warming affects Putney's main street too: when did that Victorian pub Ye Olde Spotted Horse last see a white Christmas?" (170). Such an epochal mind event necessarily has far-reaching consequences for mental constructs like works of fiction. As if taking its cue from Garton Ash, Saturday reflects the susceptibility of the nation to assaults by predatory forces sited both within and far removed from its increasingly porous borders. The novel becomes, so to speak, a study in homeland insecurity.

The effects of this troubling awareness on McEwan's narrative are oddly contradictory. Where the novel's geopolitical reach is, on one level, more ambitious than that of Howards End, on other levels its purview has contracted. Most obviously, Saturday's narrative chronology has been compressed into an exiguous 24 hours, as opposed to Howards End's more leisurely span of several years. Similarly, the variety of locale in Howards End, embracing not only the metropolis but Shropshire, the Dorset coast, and Howards End itself, is sacrificed in Saturday in the interest of unity of place: most of the action occurs in or not far from the Perowne domicile. Instead of the roving omniscience of Forster's narrator, granting privileged access to a gallery of interior worlds-Margaret Schlegel's of course, but also those of the business magnate Henry Wilcox, the plebeian Leonard Bast, and others—Saturday is limited to the consciousness of Perowne, channeling the multifariousness of London through a penetrating but monoptic gaze. Where the overall impression of the English scene created by Howards End resembles a panorama, that left by Saturday is more like a rapid flurry of snapshots. The manifold sense of compression imbues McEwan's scenario with a hectic urgency even while severely curtailing its scope.

These formal differences coincide with a crucial shift of social vision, a shift reflected by the contrast between Masterman's work and Garton Ash's. As a convenient shorthand for this contrast, one could call Masterman's book preimperial and Garton Ash's postimperial. At the date of *The Condition of England*, 1909, British rule was of course still near its global apex, a fact of which Masterman was only too cognizant. But Masterman, a confirmed impero-skeptic, looks back with nostalgia to a time before

Britain was trammeled by such involvements. He trenchantly catalogues the moral liabilities entailed by colonialism:

No Conquering Race can possess much power of introspection, of self-examination... No Conquering Race can possess irony: else it will uncomfortably suspect that its conquered peoples are secretly laughing at it, and this suspicion will excite it to resentment and reprisal. No Conquering Race can possess humour: for then one day it will find itself laughing at itself; and that day its power of conquest is gone. (50)

By the time of Garton Ash's Free World, the issue of Britain as an imperial power has long since become moot; the metropole has been compelled, even if morosely, to laugh at itself. Global preeminence has passed to the United States, to which Garton Ash assigns "the unique responsibility" (163, emphasis in original) for assuming leadership in the common struggle against environmental degradation and climate change. For him, Britain is unique principally for its potential mediating role "inside the extended family of the West" (166), and certainly not because of any enduring claim to status as paterfamilias within that clan.

This contrast conditions the two commentators' attitudes toward London itself. For Masterman, London is "this monster clot of humanity" (79), the locus where squalor, wealth, power, and frenetic hurry are grotesquely conglomerated. It is "a metropolis and capital of the Empire living a parasitic existence on tribute levied upon the boundaries of the world" (80). Masterman deplores the stultifying effect of city life-"the bustle and violence of it all" (102)—on the populace, much in the spirit of Arnold's "The Scholar-Gipsy," which laments the "sick hurry" and "divided aims" of modern society (213). A similar vein of Liberal urbanophobia runs through Howards End. "I hate this continual flux of London," Margaret Schlegel sighs (184). The Schlegels have lived equably for years in their leased London quarters, Wickham Place, and resent being obliged by a redeveloper's scheme to move out; but the novel leaves no doubt that the modern city, with its relentless tearing down and building up, is becoming a prohibitive milieu for the cultivated life to which they are pledged, embodying forces grimly hostile to moral balance and worthwhile personal relations.

For Garton Ash, by contrast, London epitomizes the vibrant multiculturalism that characterizes twenty-first-century England, despite

the new vulnerabilities attendant upon that development. He notes that "In the second half of the twentieth century, as Empire folded into that ever vaguer Commonwealth, the peoples of the former Empire came, in growing numbers, to live on the island" (17). He makes the claim for London that "Only New York can seriously compete for the title of most cosmopolitan city in the world" (18); and while he registers the consequent strains on the social fabric, his tone is by and large celebratory. Masterman's reiterated laments for the fading of the once populous and robust English countryside, vitalized by a thriving yeomanry, are absent both from Garton Ash's survey and from McEwan's kindred novel. Shortly after awakening, Perowne enjoys a quasi-epiphanic moment of admiration for his city:

Standing here, as immune to the cold as a marble statue, gazing towards Charlotte Street, towards a foreshortened jumble of façades, scaffolding and pitched roofs, Henry thinks the city is a success, a brilliant invention, a biological masterpiece—millions teeming around the accumulated and layered achievements of the centuries, as though around a coral reef, sleeping, working, entertaining themselves, harmonious for the most part, nearly everyone wanting it to work. (5)

It is a vision of urban space remote from Masterman's and Forster's, one that McEwan himself may at least provisionally be tempted to entertain.

But Perowne, a "habitual observer of his own moods," immediately "wonders about this sustained, distorting euphoria" (5), and the ensuing narrative provides ample cause to interrogate such a utopian view of London. The latter-day, postimperial metropole, unlike Masterman's, seems abundantly capable of stimulating introspection and irony. One such irony pertains to Perowne's scrape with Baxter's car, an accident that causes only trivial immediate damage but precipitates a terrifying eventual showdown. Cars, in Forster as in Masterman, embody what Bellow was to call "a condition caused by mechanization," one that militates against personal fulfillment. Late in *Howards End* the car used in the scheme to entrap the supposedly deranged Helen Schlegel becomes the very incarnation of the predatory: "The car ran silently like a beast of prey" (282). The narrator of McEwan's *The Child in Time* dryly remarks that "cars were our citizens now" (44), but on the whole McEwan refrains from hand wringing over the negative repercussions of mechanization. Henry Perowne's Mercedes

is presented as at worst an allowable indulgence, a benign piece of high technology that enables him to execute a long list of errands over the weekend. The yearning for the preindustrial past that colored Forster's and Masterman's brand of liberalism has no place on McEwan's agenda or on that of his scientifically *au fait* protagonist. The life of Darwin sent to Perowne by his daughter "At times . . . made him comfortably nostalgic for a verdant, horse-drawn, affectionate England" (6), but such nostalgia does not impede his own customary, brisk momentum or prompt him to search for a Howards End to serve as a bucolic refuge.

What the grazing collision between Perowne's sleek Mercedes and the louche Baxter's aging BMW suggests instead is an anti-idyllic dissonance ingrained in the fabric of contemporary London life. The stranger's bedraggled German car-a tarnished icon of "continental" luxury and efficiency betraying its owner's futile aspiration to the elevated status that Perowne takes for granted—loses a side mirror in the scrape. The minor mishap amounts to an insult compounding the graver injury of chronic inequality, the sort of brush between winners and losers in the twentyfirst-century capitalist sweepstakes apt to trigger eventual violence. There is a broadly comparable clash in Howards End: the sudden irruption of Leonard Bast into the lives of the Schlegels. Here too a "have" character, Helen Schegel, inadvertently deprives the "have-not" of a valued possession, in this instance Bast's battered umbrella, a pathetic badge of respectability. This encounter too ultimately leads to a violent denouement: Leonard's death at the hands of the self-righteous Charles Wilcox. What is striking, however, is the difference in treatment. Leonard, though aggrieved, does not become physically aggressive: Forster identifies the underclass as a problem for the members of the elite, but not as a threat.

While such parallels serve mainly to highlight the divergent outlooks of the two novels, both narratives confirm an important point made by Benedict Anderson: in the development of the modern nation-state, "print-capitalism created languages-of-power of a kind different from the older administrative vernacular" (45). Anderson observes that "the convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation" (46). To extend Anderson, I would argue that print competence has also been crucial in determining which subgroups have a controlling stake in the nations thus formed. Forster and McEwan alike dramatize the capacity of

language in printed form to instantiate an imagined community among those lettered adepts who belong properly to the nation and to exclude those verbally stunted subjects who cannot properly belong.

Once again, however, this common understanding of print illuminates the ideological split dividing the two novels. To Leonard Bast, engaged in a dogged effort to "improve" himself, the affluent and bookish Schlegels represent enviable initiates of the print-oriented realm of security and eminence from which he has been barred: "If only he could talk like this, he would have caught the world. Oh, to acquire culture! Oh, to pronounce foreign names correctly! Oh, to be well-informed, discoursing at ease on every subject that a lady started!" (52). The two "ladies," daughters of a distinguished German humanist, can assume as second nature an easy mastery of the high print medium that Leonard, by grappling with certified "classics" like Ruskin's Stones of Venice, toils vainly to attain. Confronted with the pair of wealthy bluestockings, Bast barrages them with an inventory of his reading, hoping to make the catalogue serve as his passport into their select society: "But [Helen] could not stop him. Borrow was imminent after Jefferies-Borrow, Thoreau and sorrow. R.L.S. brought up the rear, and the outburst ended in a swamp of books" (127). Predictably, Leonard's parade of talismanic names only dampens the Schlegels' spirits. His "brain is filled with the husks of books, culture-horrible; we want him to wash out his brain and go to the real thing" (150), Margaret explains. The "real thing" for the book-saturated Miss Schlegel can only mean first-hand experience rather than nuggets drawn from indiscriminate reading; yet a woman brought up to take a command of literature as a given finds it tempting to brainwash someone in Bast's abjected position. In that sense, her heartfelt appeal to "real life" smacks of unwitting condescension.

In the parallel scene from Saturday, where the derelict Baxter invades the opulent residence of the hyperliterate Perownes, the social imbalance enforced by print carries a tellingly different emotional valence. Here the intruder does not parade his own attainments as a reader in order to gain acceptance; instead, his vindictive designs on Henry Perowne and his family are stymied by literature, as personified by that standard-bearer of Victorian print capitalism, Matthew Arnold. Baxter himself exemplifies the nightmare of fierce irrationality that repeatedly abrades the taut surface of McEwan's fiction—a figure akin to the black dogs in the eponymous novel or to the delusionary Jed Parry in Enduring Love. Latently violent

and foredoomed by his defective DNA, Baxter, like Bast, springs from the "have-not" underclass; but his animus against the charmed, impregnable circle of the literate is far more uncontrolled and seditious than Leonard's.

According to Anderson, "there is a special kind of contemporaneous community which language alone suggests-above all in the form of poetry and songs" (145). In Saturday, what emerges starkly from the recitation of poetry is Baxter's noninclusion in the "special" community. During his forcible invasion of the Perowne enclave, the marauder is enthralled by Daisy Perowne's recitation of "Dover Beach," which he has been hoodwinked into mistaking for a composition by the young woman herself. Despite his panic, Perowne is compelled to recognize that the loutish Baxter has a capacity for responsiveness to poetry that he, for all his schooling and professional expertise, cannot match. But this insight, while it might have opened a transformative vista into Baxter's inner world, turns out to be beside the real point. What the incident primarily establishes is the intruder's ineluctable alienation from Perowne family values—from the community of print wizardry that empowers the family, ratifying their social supremacy. His apperception of the poem that so moves him is pointedly aural; that is why he can take it for the production of the young and pregnant girl standing naked in front of him rather than that of a Victorian worthy dead for over a century. (The unliterary Perowne is equally at sea as to the lyric's authorship, but his command of other, vital print resources renders his ignorance on this score merely amusing rather than disabling.)

The main effect of Baxter's enthrallment by "Dover Beach" is not to transfigure him into a mute inglorious Milton but to divert him from his fell purpose of raping Daisy and demolishing the Perownes' well-being. Print thus becomes a modus operandi ensuring that the uncouth listener will not for long penetrate the hallowed boundaries of the haut-bourgeois community. The same is true of Perowne's subsequent ruse of reading aloud from a medical offprint "casting doubt on the surgical lesioning of the globus pallidus in the treatment of Parkinson's Disease" (226), making it pass for a hopeful commentary on the baffled Baxter's own, unrelated genetic disorder. The result is the flinging of the interloper from upstairs to downstairs, a tumble that inflicts further damage on his already impaired brain, which Perowne subsequently uses his magisterial surgical finesse to mend. The perfect circle of the hyperlettered and hyperskilled remains triumphantly intact.

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At first blush, Leonard Bast's abrupt dismissal from the scene of Howards End (his death results from a sword stroke on the part of Charles Wilcox, compounded by his already weak heart) looks like an equivalent banishment of the untutored upstart from the charmed enclave of the elite. In fact, however, Forster's treatment of the character points in another direction. While Forster's mostly patronizing tone toward Bast may, as Widdowson argues, expose "The unconscious elitism of the Liberal position" (92, emphasis in original), Forster does at least pinpoint some sociohistorical causes for the character's shortcomings. He portrays Bast as a hapless inheritor of the great nineteenth-century exodus from countryside to city and of the collective failure to equip urban newcomers with the cultural and economic wherewithal needed for fulfillment. The narrator asserts flatly that Leonard "was inferior to most rich people, there is not the least doubt of it" (58), but accounts for the imputed inferiority in terms of a systemic social imbalance: "beneath these superstructures of wealth and art there wanders an ill-fed boy" (57). Forster's method of narration, his adopting the persona of an omniscient raisonneur, has, within obvious-enough limits, a counterelitist effect, calling into question the "superstructures of wealth and art." Some among Forster's gallery of reflectors, above all Margaret Schlegel's self-interrogating psyche, are privileged by being visited more often and more tenderly than others. So those who best personify liberal habits of mind receive the most lavish helping of narrative scrutiny. All the same, Leonard's floundering, confused mentality, like the self-exculpating, hectoring one of the business magnate Henry Wilcox, is allotted some measure of considerate attention. Meager as Forster's imagining of proletarian subjectivity may now seem, the attempt in itself betokens a brave determination to reach beyond the hermetic boundaries of class—to establish an imagined community of shared consciousness.

Margaret Schlegel insists that the lives of the impoverished could be transformed by a straightforward infusion of wealth: "Give them a chance. Give them money" (133). Applied to McEwan's Baxter, such reasoning would be otiose. Unlike the struggling Bast, Baxter is constructed as at bottom the victim of his own calamitous but unalterable genetic payload; his inferiority has been preprogrammed. Perowne reflects that no change in the makeup of society can remedy the deficiencies of the "losers" loitering within it: "No amount of social justice will cure or disperse this enfeebled army haunting the public places of every town" (272). By this

logic, such derelicts form part of the detritus left by the "late failure of radical hopes" cited by Saul Bellow; now, in the postradical twenty-first century, the best hope for promoting the health of the community is not social activism but clinical expertise.

McEwan enables Baxter's objectification as a "case" by channeling the events of the narrative through the consciousness of Perowne, the urbane and cultivated diagnostician. The choice of point of view has here, as often, powerful ideological implications. Where Forster's omniscient narration allowed for a measure of egalitarianism, McEwan's use of a unitary center of perception—a more "modern" novelistic convention—situates the reader within a discursive universe that is relentlessly judicious, probing, and "superior." Perowne's enveloping ego system provides a congenial medium for those "flowers of civilization" who read serious literary fiction, in effect a cushion against the grating roar of other sorts of lives being led.

The major occasion on which Perowne is prompted to an act of empathy with such an outsider, Baxter's forced entry, clinches the point:

Before Baxter speaks, Perowne tries to see the room through his eyes, as if that might help predict the degree of trouble ahead: the two bottles of champagne, the gin and the bowls of lemon and ice, the belittlingly high ceiling and its mouldings, the Bridget Riley prints flanking the Hodgkin, the muted lamps, the cherry wood floor beneath the Persian rugs, the careless piles of serious books, the decades of polish in the thakat table. The scale of retribution could be large. (207)

Although some of his observations, like the one about the belittlingly high ceiling, show sensivity to the intruder's point of view, Perowne's musings betoken no genuine fellow feeling. Instead, they are at bottom diagnostic, betraying a frantic class defensiveness, the troubled awareness of one whose elevated status rests on chic possessions and the nonchalant mastery of print ("the careless piles of serious books"). Later, when the danger has passed, the old poet John Grammaticus's gallant impulse to extend sympathy to Baxter—"there came a point after Daisy recited Arnold for the second time when I actually began to feel sorry for the fellow" (229)—is inwardly rebuked by Perowne: "What weakness, what delusional folly, to permit yourself sympathy towards a man, sick or not, who invades your house like this" (230).

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Perowne's feelings toward Daisy's Italian boyfriend provide an instructive foil. Like Baxter, Giulio is an imponderable quantity, a stranger who has, from Perowne's perspective, barged uninvited into the sacrosanct enclave of the family. Amusingly, Perowne must contend "with nascent outrage at this unknown Italian's assault on the family's peace and cohesion, at his impertinently depositing his seed without first making himself available for inspection" (240). Yet the impertinent Giulio has infinitely less to fear from inspection than the unpresentable Londoner Baxter, and vastly more likelihood of being absorbed into the Perowne clan. "Foreign" though he may be, he belongs to the global guild of the highly literate and academically certified, an imagined community that by the twenty-first century has become arguably more cohesive even than the nation. Slavoj Žižek, in his appraisal of Garton Ash's Free World, observes:

The slum-dwellers are the counter-class to the other newly emerging class, the so-called "symbolic class" (managers, journalists and PR people, academics, artists etc.) which is also uprooted and perceives itself as universal (a New York academic has more in common with a Slovene academic than with blacks in Harlem half a mile from his campus).

The globetrotting Perownes confirm Žižek's observation. Henry Perowne can more easily relate to his American colleague Jay Strauss or even to the unknown Italian Giulio than to outcast compatriots like Baxter. And another group of compatriots with whom he feels no kinship is the multitude protesting the looming Anglo-American Iraq incursion. For Perowne, that throng corresponds to the "ignorant armies" that "clash by night" in "Dover Beach." He sees the protesters as resisting, under the aegis of a cranky, "politically correct" dogma, the forcible removal of a thuggish and barbaric tyrant. "It's a condition of the times," he thinks, "this compulsion to hear how it stands with the world, and be joined to the generality, to a community of anxiety" (176). Such pervasive dread is the hallmark of an alternate imagined global community, one which Perowne wishes at all costs to keep at arm's length. The protest, in fact, feeds directly into the more immediate, personal threat to his safety. It is the rally that leads to his scrape with Baxter's BMW, impeding his normal momentum and prompting him to swerve down a by-street so as to be on time for his appointment with Strauss. Baxter and the marchers, though overtly antagonistic, are linked by a submerged affinity—their

common unwillingness, as Perowne sees it, to take responsibility for the consequences of their actions. In his view, the protest in the name of nonviolence signals an acquiescence in the pathological violence of the Iraqi dictator, and Baxter's private antisocial violence in effect parallels, for all its crudity, this idealistic but wrongheaded public action.

It is worth noting that McEwan's own statements indicate some sympathy with Perowne's position:

"Walking past marchers rather than with them," [McEwan] says, "I was troubled by the sheer level of happiness on the street. I did think whatever the reasoning of America for going in, history has offered us this chance to get rid of Saddam. If you decide you don't want that, it is probably a very reasonable view, but it is a vote for more torture, more genocide. It is a somber, grave choice." (Gerard)

I do not, of course, mean to imply a seamless identification between author and protagonist. In a characteristic move, McEwan has distributed some of his own often discordant convictions among various agents in the book. Catherine Deveney reports:

Henry rows with his daughter, Daisy, about the [prospective] war [in Iraq]. It was, says McEwan, the conversation he had within himself. "I was very torn by it, so she represents one bit of me and Henry represents some other bit. It was like two voices in my head."

Such dialogism constitutes one of McEwan's primary strengths as a novelist. Nevertheless, it is not Daisy's voice of protest that prevails in *Saturday*. In his review of *Free World*, Žižek argues:

Garton Ash's analysis does not allow him to see how the things he condemns (ruthless disregard for the environment, the hypocritical double standards imposed by the superpowers etc) are products of the social dynamics which sustain the role of the exporters of democracy and guardians of universal human rights.

In distancing himself from the Iraq protesters, Perowne by default joins the ranks of Žižek's "exporters" and "guardians." The novel overall performs a comparable evasion: the global threats to the Perownes' eminently civilized way of life, enacted as they are on an essentially personal stage,

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become pretexts for sidestepping underlying issues of social equity and abjection.

Quoting a famous passage from Culture and Anarchy in which Arnold defines culture as "the study of perfection," Widdowson comments:

These are fine values but what do they rest on, and do they involve "all parts of our society"? They rest, of course, on exploitation and hence on ascendance; and that rests on having wealth, or, putting it another way, on the *possibility* of leading a life in which the cultivation of such values is viable.

(40; emphasis in original)

Admirer of Arnold though he was, Forster built an awareness of this exploitation underpinning "fine values" into his early twentieth-century Condition of England novel. His prime mediator of such values, Margaret Schlegel, is under no illusions about the "islands" of money (72) that support her family's way of life. His representative of the exploited underclass, Leonard Bast, disappears from the scene, but Bast's yeoman stock has mingled with the cerebral, cosmopolitan Schlegel lineage to produce a hybrid—Helen's child—who transgresses class boundaries yet will inherit, with Howards End, the finest tradition of liberal England. Not even this inkling of social expansiveness, however, is detectable in *Saturday*. Where *Howards End* in its hesitant way troubles the apparatus of English privilege, *Saturday* tacitly takes that structure as given.

In his recent book Wars of Position, Timothy Brennan raises objections to the widespread contemporary belief "that boundaries of all sorts have broken down, the nation-state is at its end, post-Fordism has triumphed" (37). Brennan wryly observes, "None of these points requires any proof; indeed, proof would be difficult to find, since legally and politically it is more the case that boundaries have intensified" (37). Brennan's point is borne out even by casual observation: nationalist sentiment, often of a virulently chauvinistic type, still drives politics in a wide array of geographical contexts, promoting ethnically based separatist movements, the barring or marginalization of immigrants, and other related phenomena. Yet national boundaries are far from being the only walls to have hardened; barriers segregating social classes too have defied the logic of globalization. As Saturday suggests, while the elite of today may feel a sophisticated kinship that vaults over divisions of nationality, the ramparts of privilege shielding them from the resentful claims of the underclass

now need to be all the more vigilantly patrolled. Ultimately, McEwan's novel has less to do with the condition of England in general than with the vulnerable condition of the English intelligentsia.

The American social commentator Barbara Ehrenreich has noted the disappearance of the nonaffluent as a category from contemporary social consciousness:

When I watch TV over my dinner at night, I see a world in which almost everyone makes \$15 an hour or more, and I'm not just thinking of the anchor folks. The sitcoms and dramas are about fashion designers or schoolteachers or lawyers, so it's easy for a fast-food worker or nurse's aide to conclude that she is an anomaly—the only one, or almost only one, who hasn't been invited to the party. And in a sense she would be right: the poor have disappeared from the culture at large, from its political rhetoric and intellectual endeavors as well as from its daily entertainments. (117–18)

In Saturday the party is being held at the sumptuous home of the privileged and print-savvy Perownes. The fish stew being concocted by Henry serves as the symbolic centerpiece of the feast, to which gatecrashers from the underclass are emphatically not invited. McEwan's London may be, as Perowne wishes to believe, "a success, a brilliant invention, a biological masterpiece"; even if no longer the hub of empire, still the site of flourishing global interchange. It is, however, at risk from the Baxters stalking within it, bent on crashing the party and spoiling the elegant fun. Howards End, in its time, may have adumbrated its own siege mentality, but Forster showed at least some willingness to peer outside the walls and even on occasion to gingerly open a gate. Tendencies to exclusiveness still incipient in the earlier novel have come to full fruition in McEwan's recent one. The "confused alarms of trouble and flight" heard by Arnold in "Dover Beach" permeate the London of Saturday. What they portend is a narrowing and hardening of the liberal vision that had once energized the Condition of England novel.

Notes

1. See, for example, David Malcolm, who calls *The Child in Time* "a late twentieth-century 'condition of England' novel' (9).

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- 2. The idea of penetration, primarily in sexual terms, provokes the pivotal crisis in McEwan's most recent book, On Chesil Beach.
- 3. In an interview with *Der Spiegel* McEwan praises Blair, albeit backhandedly, as "the least bad prime minister we've had."
- 4. Although McEwan was surely familiar with Forster's famous study of English society, I do not wish to suggest that Saturday amounts to a premeditated imitation of it, in the fashion of Zadie Smith's novel of the same year, On Beauty. (The opening line of On Beauty, "One may as well begin with Jerome's e-mails to his father," parodies the opening line of Howards End: "One may as well begin with Helen's letters to her sister," and much of the subsequent text sustains the parody.) While there are stray correspondences of detail between Saturday and Howards End—the dominant male figure in each is named Henry, the names of the underclass characters, Bast and Baxter, have a chiming resonance, and so forth—these are most likely inadvertant.
- 5. Arnold's lyric seems to have assumed something resembling talismanic status for McEwan. On Chesil Beach is riddled with more or less overt echoes of the poem, starting with the book's title itself.
- 6. The novel is, of course, eerily prophetic in foreshadowing what neither Perowne nor (at the time of writing) his creator could have known about: the deadly terrorist attacks on London of 7/7/05. See McEwan's comments for *Der Spiegel* shortly after the attacks:

SPIEGEL: Your new book, "Saturday," is written in expectation of an act of terrorism. Now it has happened. What was your first thought when you heard it was a terrorist attack? McEWAN: It confirmed my book. I mean, it's not that I take any satisfaction from it, nor did I share any great insight, everybody's been waiting.

7. This formal feature has prompted some commentators to compare Saturday with classic modernist texts like Joyce's Ulysses and Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway. Some of the parallels between Saturday and the latter work are especially suggestive; apart from the single-day time frame, Woolf's novel too features an outsider figure, Septimus Smith, who potentially poses a moral challenge to the socially superior protagonist, in this case Clarissa Dalloway. However, while the implications of such correspondences might be worth tracing, Mrs. Dalloway, unlike both Saturday and Howards End, makes no overt attempt to fit into the Condition of England mode. This is not to deny that, like most of Woolf's fiction, the book yields insights into the social life of the England of its day.

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8. Canadian readers will be likely to raise their eyebrows at Garton Ash's omission of Toronto.

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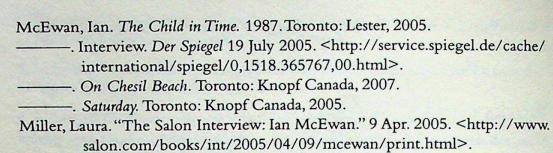
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Medieval Tradition and Modern War

Bloody Good: Chivalry, Sacrifice, and the Great War

by Allen J. Frantzen

Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004. 335 pages

Marlene A. Briggs

Popular versions of Arthurian romance feature lone knights, imperiled maidens, fortified castles, and ferocious dragons. Sweeping aside these lifeless cartoons, Allen J. Frantzen insists that chivalry is neither trite nor moribund. On the contrary, he argues that its compelling codes and creeds mobilized men to enlist and, remarkably enough, to persevere in the appalling conditions of trench warfare. Bloody Good contradicts commonplace wisdom to maintain that the attrition battles of 1914-1918 exemplify the persistence of medieval traditions rather than their extinction. If, as the author states, "medieval ideas [...] help to explain violence in the modern world" (9), misconceptions about chivalry may not only distort the remote past but may also obscure the culture and history of the twentieth century. This book encompasses diverse figures such as Geoffroi de Charny, who fought in the Hundred Years' War (1337-1453) and celebrated self-mastery as the chief attribute of the warrior, and Wilfred Owen, who won the Military Cross for bravery in action (1918) even as he espoused a poetics of pity in his haunting war lyrics. By juxtaposing historical periods often perceived in antithetical terms, Frantzen, the author of six previous books on the Middle Ages, makes an unusual contribution to the substantial body of research on the First World War. Unfortunately, however, his emphasis on "the moral and theological meanings" of chivalry (9) promotes the delineation of religious principles rather than historical practices in his treatment of martial cultures. In his idiosyncratic and sweeping project, he subordinates complex ethical, methodological, and social questions to Christian hermeneutics, engendering a disembodied conception of bloodless good at odds with his title. Bloody Good highlights the significance of studying conflict in compara-

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tive contexts and transhistorical modes even as it reveals the intellectual difficulties inherent in this daunting agenda.

Shifting between the armored knight and the camouflaged conscript, Frantzen traverses centuries and borders in his two-part critical genealogy of chivalry. The first five chapters interpret chronicles, commentaries, hagiographies, and manuals on knighthood spanning from the Anglo-Saxon poem "The Dream of the Rood" (c. 900) to William Caxton's translations of texts by Christine de Pisan and Ramon Llull (c. 1500). Following a transitional chapter that surveys the reconstruction of chivalry in the nineteenth century by figures including Stacey Grimaldi, Kenelm Henry Digby, Thomas Carlyle, and Samuel Smiles, the second half of the book focuses on pictorial media from England, France, Germany, and Russia as well as lyrics, letters, and memorials (1914-1989). Common to both halves of the study is a definition of chivalry as "discipline, which leads to worthiness that is measured by brave deeds freely undertaken, extending to the greatest distinction, the crown of martyrdom and its promise of proximity to Christ" (232). The Passion supplies Bloody Good with its leitmotif. Frantzen specifies revenge (sacrifice), forgiveness (antisacrifice), and martyrdom (self-sacrifice) as a tripartite array of responses to the death of Christ. In this reading, Edward Burne-Jones's painting The Miracle of the Merciful Knight (1863), which depicts a crucified Christ embracing a virtuous knight, demonstrates an antisacrificial ethos. Frantzen recalls this painting at various points in his analysis. Yet along with fellowship, fidelity, and piety, as the author readily acknowledges, fratricide, predation, and vengeance characterize the history of knighthood. The paradoxes of chivalry thus illuminate the divided legacy of the Crucifixion: the Passion exposes the dynamics of persecution but also served as a justification for violence against Jews, Muslims, and others.

Crucifixion scenes, as the author amply documents, recur in representations of modern warfare. In Frantzen's eccentric account of the Great War, however, the Passion of Christ dwarfs the defining features of modernity, including industrialization, nationalism, and urbanization. How does the archetypal story of the Passion, with its ensemble of victim(s), persecutors, and bystanders, facilitate discussions of total war in the twentieth century? Regrettably, Frantzen avoids speculative lines of inquiry that might enrich as well as qualify his ambitious book. At the outset, he does not situate himself in relation to the central disciplines, fields, and scholars germane to his work; instead, he confines his methodological

discussion to one section of chapter 2. Despite concise and lucid exegesis, two critical concepts—sacrifice and abjection—warrant fuller elaboration in relation to the theories of René Girard and Julia Kristeva, respectively. Frantzen selectively privileges Girard's views on sacrifice and scapegoating without outlining pertinent controversies; although he hopes to generate "new insights into violence, its uses and misuses" (8), he brackets his discussion of abjection to sinner and savior in a Christian context. He also confines his dialogue with major scholars of World War I, including Paul Fussell and Jay Winter, to brief asides. On the surface, the author of Bloody Good appears to embrace the aims and methods of cultural history, an approach committed, at least in part, to interpreting the material conditions of the past. However, idealism rather than materialism structures this scholarly work, a book best classified as a study in the history of ideas. On one hand, the author acknowledges the mystical dimensions of faith and the irrational nature of violence. On the other hand, he assumes that bloody conflicts have didactic functions and that the living may derive lessons from the contemplation of the dead.

Frantzen distances himself from the "gender-centered universe of modern literary criticism" (22), although masculinity is a key category in his work on the seemingly discontinuous roles of knight, gentleman, citizen, and soldier. Bloody Good underlines the stability rather than the changeability of social codes, hazarding that medieval and modern warfare culminate in a "coherent history of heroic masculinity" (4). This contention prompts the question: can the prowess of a mounted knight outfitted in costly chain mail compare with the lot of the badly equipped volunteer subject to an artillery barrage? Modernist writer and Great War veteran David Jones grapples with this issue in his preface to In Parenthesis: "We feel a rubicon has been passed between striking with a hand weapon as men used to do and loosing poison from the sky as we do ourselves" (xiv). According to Jones, the ideals of chivalry cannot be reconciled with the tactical strategies of notorious First World War offensives such as the Somme (1916). Frantzen overcomes Jones's hesitation, however, suggesting that the homosocial codes of chivalry supersede the technological innovations dividing Antioch (1096), Agincourt (1415), and Albert (1916). In his view, discipline forges the corporate identity fundamental to the exercise of chivalry regardless of period, region, formation, or franchise. Thus he aligns knights and soldiers on common moral ground: in "military cultures, medieval and modern," fellowship is "the real stuff of

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romance, the foundation of chivalry" (94). Charles Sargeant Jagger's Hyde Park Memorial for the Royal Artillery Commission (1925) in London furnishes him with artistic evidence for his thesis: its dedication, "Here was a royal fellowship," echoes Shakespeare's Henry V. With the exception of Owen, canonical twentieth-century authors who might complement as well as complicate this argument, such as Jones himself, play no part in Frantzen's discussion. His redemptive vision of war minimizes the shattering violence that gave rise to extreme states of despair, elation, and frenzy under fire. Bloody Good underestimates the volatile psychology of combat: the enduring motivation of local bonds, rather than the losses destabilizing group solidarity, drives the analysis. In this connection, Frantzen endorses Tony Ashworth's perspective on military interactions as outlined in Trench Warfare 1914-1918: The Live and Let Live System (1980). Although Frantzen rightly distinguishes the voluntary ethos of chivalry from the state coercion of conscription, he neglects other social distinctions and material differences.

Perhaps Frantzen's bid to stress continuity rather than rupture prompts him to overlook the novel aspects of mechanized warfare and total mobilization. He introduces but does not pursue the implications of discourses of "reverse chivalry" triggered by events such as the invasion of Belgium (1914), the sinking of the *Lusitania* (1915), and the use of poison gas (1915), incidents regarded as heinous departures from established protocols of belligerent conduct in their time (160). Notwithstanding these modern watersheds, Frantzen repudiates discomfort with mass violence in an elaboration of his title:

Chivalry reminds us why there is war: [...] because ideas and traditions can be worth dying for—and worth killing for. Chivalry explains why such dedication, single-mindedness, love, even bloody-mindedness are, after all, necessary and good. (263)

In fact, he is unabashed in his justification of armed conflict, describing World War I as "a bloody but bracing discipline that ennobled and even glorified many of those who practiced it, including the lowborn, even as it lead to their deaths" (118). To support this harmonizing narrative of unprecedented slaughter, Frantzen selects letters from the archives of the Imperial War Museum by Lieutenant H. F. Bowser and Private John W. Mudd to exemplify the chivalric virtues of faith, friendship, and patience. In this manner he yokes together the knight and the conscript, the *cruces*-

ignati (L. "those signed by the cross") and the commissioned ranks. While the lone pilot frequently serves as a displaced symbol of chivalric romance in the received history of World War I, Frantzen's privileged figure is the long-suffering infantry soldier. Curiously, his treatment of the trenches lacks the wrenching details that characterize his examination of the excesses of knighthood.

Bloody Good includes almost 100 black-and-white pictures and 16 pages of color plates. Throughout, the author invokes both exceptional and quotidian emblems of revenge, sacrifice, and self-sacrifice. Frantzen opens each chapter with a striking image relevant to the First World War, an effective organizational strategy for his expansive monograph. The majority of his visual materials derive from the Imperial War Museum in London and the Hoover Institution Archives at Stanford University. Frantzen traveled extensively to research the topic, and his recourse to images is necessarily selective. Musing on the wealth of materials available to him, he ventures, "It is not more evidence that is needed [...] but more thoughtful and creative responses to the sights and sounds that the evidence brings to us" (262). Arguably, such "thoughtful and creative responses" assume greater urgency as time passes. When Frantzen visits neglected memorials in Bavaria, for instance, he wryly remarks, "To search for memorials is to discover how completely they have been forgotten" (209). Many memorable recruiting posters, moreover, exploit the forgotten iconography of chivalry. One of the most well-known British designs features a mounted knight and a rearing dragon: it urges men to follow the example of St. George, proclaiming "Britain Needs You at Once" (12). Frantzen's gloss on this poster showcases the acumen of the medievalist. Unlike St. Edmund, martyred by the Danes in 869, who was the patron saint of the Crusades, St. George and his reptilian adversary animate both British and German war propaganda. Successive scribes rewrote his history to serve the causes of militant Christianity; during the First World War, each side enlisted him in its ideological arsenal. Though monuments and posters from many nations incorporate chivalric motifs, such traces become increasingly illegible as the conflict recedes in history.

Given Frantzen's own adherence to a vision of historical and moral continuity, he might have enlarged upon the transmission and mobilization of the iconography and pedagogy of pious male prowess in the twentieth century. As he reminds us, the Victorian reconstitution of chivalric ideals accentuated the significance of duty; in this regard, Mark Girouard's

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book The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman (1981) is a key intellectual precedent. A deliberate effort to disentangle medievalism, medieval culture, and medieval ideas might clarify the different modes of dissemination and reception at stake in an analysis of modern chivalry. Significantly, Bloody Good often dwells on artifacts directed at noncombatants: war loans routinely featured chivalric motifs in their appeals for funds. Various constituents and their distinct investments in chivalry, namely church and state as well as civilians and soldiers, however, require careful differentiation. With respect to the latter group, nineteenth-century reinterpretations of knighthood influenced the enthusiasms as well as the disaffections of civilian soldiers. Well-known officer-poet Siegfried Sassoon, to cite one example, both embraces and rejects the chivalric tradition. In memoirs and poems he envisages himself as Sir Galahad, hero of Thomas Malory's Morte Darthur and Alfred Tennyson's Idylls of the King, even as he indicts popular conceptions of medieval romance as a mode of death denial committed by credulous female spectators in "Glory of Women": "You worship decorations; you believe / That chivalry redeems the war's disgrace." On this subject, Frantzen concurs (192) with Margaret Higonnet's opinion that women should occupy a central rather than a peripheral position in the study of war. Yet he devotes little time to the roles of women in the heterogeneous discourses of modern chivalry. On a more ominous note, color plates of posters by Helmuth Stockman and Lina von Schaurath promoting the Freikorps, volunteer regiments subsequently associated with German National Socialism, raise political and social questions regarding fascism and its deployment of chivalric tradition that this book ignores; Stockman's design appears on the dust jacket. In summary, Frantzen fails to address controversies relevant to his topic, undermining the cogency and import of his hypothesis.

In his concluding chapter, "Circles of Grief: Chivalry and the Heart of Sacrifice," Frantzen classifies Owen's celebrated poem "Strange Meeting" as a defense of chivalry. Owen undoubtedly espoused self-sacrifice in the name of brotherhood: "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Frantzen's discussion of Owen, however, as well as his posthumous interpreters Benjamin Britten and Derek Jarman, is unduly schematic and truncated. The disparate contexts that motivate the reception of Owen's work go unremarked. More significantly, Owen's disturbing representations of flashbacks, numbing, and survivor guilt in poems such as "Dulce et Decorum Est,"

"Exposure," "Insensibility," and "Mental Cases" complicate the virtues of "camaraderie, concern, and self-sacrifice," which Frantzen affirms as "chivalry's vision of love" (265). In my view, a credible consideration of chivalry in Owen's war poetry demands an analysis of the dynamics of aggression, attachment, loss, and trauma constituting combat subcultures. In addition, Frantzen disregards the intractable rift between home and front, that "dismal hermeneutic circle" (262) animating many of Owen's canonical lyrics, wherein revenge, antisacrifice, and self-sacrifice, to recall Frantzen's tripartite schema, seem inextricably bound. Despite his debts to Girard and his interest in Owen's work, Frantzen does not attend to the status of the combatant as scapegoat, a social problem that Virginia Woolf explores in Mrs. Dalloway. Neither the vicissitudes of the unconscious nor the dilemmas of the veteran engage the author's scholarly imagination. More generally, Frantzen demonstrates little interest in determining the specific discourses that abet or perpetuate cyclic violence in the modern period. Salient for its absence from the discussion of Owen, Britten, and Jarman, too, is the subject of homosexuality, an odd omission in view of Frantzen's previous work on the topic, Before the Closet: Same-Sex Love from Beowulf to Angels in America (1998).

Christian codes of violence and restraint derived from the practices and principles of medieval knighthood, Frantzen contends, function as "bedrock" rather than mere "backdrop" (265). He thus refutes wellrehearsed arguments on the death of chivalry, cautioning, "there never was a time when chivalry was perceived as other than in decline" (117). But while Merlin may still cry out from under his rock, it is difficult to heed his voice in a secular, media-saturated North American urban milieu. Certainly, vestigial forms of chivalry persist in the twenty-first century. Former New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani and Microsoft founder Bill Gates each accepted an honorary knighthood, a distinction that dates back to 1917. Perhaps the Boy Scout movement begun by Robert Baden Powell to cultivate "Young Knights of the Empire" remains the most familiar institution premised on an ethos of fidelity and service. Alternately, as Frantzen observes, technological weapons and paramilitary groups in the United States such as the so-called Crusader missile system and the Ku Klux Klan exploit the historical and rhetorical precedent of holy war (9). In a global public sphere increasingly riven by divergent appeals to sacrifice, the contemplation of chivalry necessarily stimulates critical reflection on abiding divisions between East and West. More specifically, Frantzen

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likens chivalry to "a voice calling out from under us" (265), a presence hidden in plain sight whose figures and symbols pervade Great War cemeteries and memorials. His book enhances an understanding of the ways in which emblems such as the cross and sword link the First World War to medieval European traditions: the Cenotaph in my city displays an inverted sword, one of the most prominent symbols of Christian sacrifice. As Frantzen explains, "The cross-shaped sword mediates the sacrifice of Christ, who vanquished death on the cross, and the work of the knight, who destroys the enemies of the cross with the sword" (88). Bloody Good challenges readers to look again at their own towns and neighborhoods, to discover how the iconography and pedagogy of chivalry inspire cherished beliefs, local organizations, and commemorative rituals. The limitations of this often erudite but ultimately disappointing book, however, dramatize the ongoing challenges of cultivating searching and self-reflexive methodologies responsive to the study of martial codes and material contexts in distinct historical periods.

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Indecent Modernism

British Modernism and Censorship

by Celia Marshik

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. 270 pages

Peter Nohrnberg

An impressively researched and carefully argued work of literary and historical scholarship, Celia Marshik's *British Modernism and Censorship* confirms the robust health of the "new" modernist studies. This account of the relationship of major British modernists to the culture of censorship in the first half of the twentieth century immerses its reader in a time when social purity organizations such as the National Vigilance Association, the National Council of Public Morals, and the Society for the Suppression of Blasphemous Literature exerted influence over the production, distribution, and reception of literary texts. These groups often brought suspect literary works to the attention of the British Home Office, which, after the Obscene Publications (Campbell) Act of 1857, was empowered to seize and destroy all copies of a publication deemed obscene. They were also in close contact with the Circulating Library Association, which could suppress books by making them unavailable to a large swath of the reading public.

Marshik imagines that the notional essay on the "Ethics of Indecency" mentioned in Virginia Woolf's Jacob's Room might have served as a "rallying cry" (11) for British modernists, but rather than present her reader with an entirely heroic story of modernism's commitment to the indecent, she offers a nuanced account of the compromises modernist authors made with their censorious culture. Marshik argues that the literal and figurative policing of the literary representation of taboo subjects (chiefly sexual) by social purity activists and by the official censor created a "censorship dialectic" (3) that shaped the careers of modernist writers. In chapters on Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Bernard Shaw, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and Jean Rhys, Marshik offers incisive readings of both canonical and neglected texts, and reveals instances of artistic self-censorship through the review of manuscript materials. Drawing on Michael Levine's Writing through Repression: Literature, Censorship, Psychoanalysis, Marshik

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suggests that the repressive forces of censorship allowed for the development of a stylistics of indirection and irony that may be counted among the aesthetic achievements of modernist writing.

Marshik's choice of modernists might at first seem quixotic when we discover that three of the five authors discussed in *British Modernism and Censorship* never actually experienced government censure of their writings. By choosing to include writers whose encounters with authority was more oblique, however, Marshik is able to emphasize the pervasiveness of the climate of suspicion and fear generated by the threat of censorship or suppression. In also examining the more direct confrontations of Shaw and Joyce with censorship, Marshik provides a cogent account of how writers developed strategies to defend the modernism of their art while mocking the censorious voices of journalists, government officials, and purity reformers who deemed their writing obscene.

The book begins with a chapter on Dante Gabriel Rossetti that focuses on the revisions he made to "Jenny" after the verdict in Regina v. Hicklin (1868) codified obscenity and put the legal defense of a text beyond its author's intentions. Having buried the initial draft of the poem with his dead wife, Elizabeth Siddal, Rossetti reworked the poem for publication after its exhumation some seven years later. By comparing revisions made to his poem between its draft form in 1860 and its publication in 1870, Marshik reveals Rossetti's participation in the "censorship dialectic." "Jenny" returned from the grave a less erotic poem, yet still sensuous enough to be singled out as repulsive by Robert Buchanan in "The Fleshly School of Poetry." Buchanan's negative review represented a wider public backlash against the sexual themes of Rossetti's Poems and thus set the stage for later conflicts.

Marshik finds in Rossetti a protomodernist both in his attempts to accommodate his critics—one of the poems lambasted by Buchanan, "Nuptial Bliss," was subsequently removed by Rossetti in a later edition of *Poems*—and to respond to them by justifying the novelty of his art. In "The Stealthy School of Criticism" Rossetti defended his poetry on the aesthetic grounds of representing life from an "inner standing point" (337). Rossetti thus anticipates modernism's manifesto making, yet, as Marshik argues, subsequent modernists would also recognize the value of addressing their critics more indirectly, often employing intermediaries. By bringing Rossetti into the modernist fold Marshik helps us reconceptualize literary modernism and question the story that its major practitioners

told themselves about breaking with the recent past, a story subsequently perpetuated by literary historians and critics.

Rossetti's attempt to represent a prostitute's life from an "inner standing point" in "Jenny" becomes a mimetic touchstone of sorts for the modernists Marshik goes on to consider. In her second chapter, "Bernard Shaw's Defensive Laughter," Marshik chronicles the difficulty censorship imposed on Shaw's dramatic endeavors and gives particular attention to the problems Shaw faced when he attempted to dramatize the life of a prostitute turned madam. Mrs. Warren's Profession was "precensored" in England by the Examiner of Plays and only reached a limited audience in print form as part of Plays: Pleasant and Unpleasant. Shaw was apparently able to get permission to have the play performed after revising it to the extent that it became incoherent, having transformed Mrs. Warren from brothel keeper to crime boss. When the unsanitized play was finally performed in the United States, the audience found it objectionable, and after its New York premier the police commissioner arrested the house manager for "maintaining a public nuisance"—the same charge, Marshik notes, leveled against brothel keepers. Marshik attributes the failure of the audience and critics to grasp the playwright's didactic intentions as revealing their inability to perceive a prostitute as transcending the sexed body. One wonders whether the drama staged by the authorities within the theater but beyond the stage's "fourth wall" might not also have contributed to the offense taken by the audience, especially since the charge against the house manager put them, as paying customers, in a rather awkward position.

In "The Author's Apology," Shaw attempted to defend the performance of Mrs. Warren's Profession against official censorship in England both by aligning it with the work of social purity activists, whom he believed would approve of it, and by claiming that the very fact of its censorship proved its value. Shaw's second claim implicitly contradicted his first, for surely the joint committee of the Central Vigilance Society and the Salvation Army he imagined passing judgment over his work institutionally embodied the "current conceptions" (247) that he claimed all progress challenged. As Marshik notes, Shaw's second claim allowed him to transform "what might have been regarded as vulgarity and bad taste into a sign of artistic modernity" (59). Ironically, this rhetorical move, crucial to later modernists such as Joyce, may overstate the challenge to convention represented in Shaw's play; Marshik suggests that Mrs. Warren's

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Profession actually reinforces the sensational narratives of the "white slave trade" given currency by William T. Stead in his "Maiden Tribute" series of articles.

Marshik convincingly argues that Shaw's confrontations with censorship led him to articulate a "modern" agenda for his work. The chapter offers a useful reminder of the direct aim Shaw took at purity campaigners in his now-neglected melodrama The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet. As Marshik notes, the play includes a "Vigilance Committee" made up of debauched drunks, thereby satirizing the vigilantism of the various organizations that had taken on the role of Britain's unofficial morality police. Shaw effectively used the power of the Irish national cause to garner support and publicity for the play, as he enlisted Lady Gregory and W. B. Yeats to assuage the objections of the viceroy and to help produce the play at the Abbey Theatre after it had been censored in England. Marshik might have enriched her account of this distinctly non-English moment in British modernism by including James Joyce's humorous journalistic piece about the censorship of the play, as it accords with her view of Shaw's encounter with censorship as a positive force that put him in the forefront of modernity: "If anything, he [Shaw] felt himself honored by the arbitrary ban imposed upon his comedies as upon Ibsen's Ghosts, Tolstoy's The Power of Darkness and Wilde's Salomé" (152). Joyce's description of the controversy surrounding the production of the play and the subsequent selling out of the seats seven times over for the first night suggests that he may have first learned from Shaw the value—literary and economic—of staging a public battle with the censor.

British Modernism and Censorship registers an important shift in the authorial response to censorship around the time of the controversy surrounding The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet in 1909: writers began to band together to form their own anticensorship movement. Social purity groups already exerted considerable influence over public opinion, however, and a convening of a Joint Select Committee regarding dramatic censorship resulted in no change to the law. Still, the hearing gave Shaw a platform from which to voice his grievances publicly and thus allowed him to position himself on the forefront of the anticensorship movement. Despite his outward defiance against the censor, Shaw beat a tactical retreat by abandoning "unpleasant plays" in order to write seemingly more "pleasant" plays that could satirize the culture of censorship without being judged obscene. This cogent account of Shaw's later career

is supported by a sensitive reading of Pygmalion. Marshik reveals a satiric undercurrent to the comedy, one in which Eliza's overactive imagination appears to have been colonized by the melodramatic narratives of female victimization disseminated by social purity activists. Calling attention to the five-pound note Eliza's father asks of Higgins, Marshik hears a satiric allusion to Stead's "Maiden Tribute," in which Stead recounts purchasing the putative virginity of a London girl named Eliza Armstrong for five pounds in order to prove the existence of London's underground trafficking of virgins. In Marshik's account, the play mocks Stead and the purity campaign he initiated, adding insult to injury when Eliza's dissolute father becomes a lecturer for the "Wannafeller Moral Reform World League," which sounds rather like an organization the younger Shaw himself might have joined. Marshik goes on to show that the casting of Stella Campbell as Eliza in the original production of Pygmalion ironically undermined Shaw's satire, as Campbell had made a name for herself playing the role of "woman with a past" in a number of late Victorian plays including, most famously, that of Paula Tanqueray in Pinero's The Second Mrs. Tanqueray.

It might be argued that by moving away from the more earnest didacticism of his earlier plays, Shaw's theatrical practice not only escaped censorship but became more like that of his countryman, Oscar Wilde. Much as Wilde slyly satirized the heavy-handed didacticism of Shaw's early plays at the end of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, so Shaw goes on to emulate Wilde by satirizing purity reformers in *Pygmalion*. (Shaw himself criticized *The Importance of Being Earnest* for seeming outdated, a comment that may reflect anxiety about his own modernity.) Marshik does not discuss Wilde in her study, yet Wilde's status as a protomodernist who avoided the censor by writing subversive comedy surely deserves mention.

Marshik's chapter "Virginia Woolf and the Gender of Censorship" offers perhaps the most compelling example of the power that censorship held over literary culture in Britain during the first half of the twentieth century. Woolf represents a special and especially painful case, as her dual career as a writer and also a publisher put her in the position, potentially, of having her reputation compromised by censorship and her finances ruined as well: the Obscene Publications Act decreed that all financial penalties and losses would fall to the publishers and printers of any work convicted of obscene libel. Thus while Woolf attempted to write about the life of public women, including prostitutes, from an "inner standing

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point" in *The Voyage Out, Jacob's Room*, and *Orlando*, she herself lived in what Marshik deems a "literary panopticon" (92). Marshik traces the interplay between Woolf's need as a publisher to anticipate what might attract the attentions of the censor and her own self-censorship as a writer. As evidence of the very real threat Woolf faced as a writer, Marshik presents evidence from the National Archives of Great Britain that *Orlando* was considered for suppression (curiously, however, the actual file on the novel has gone missing). Although Woolf was unaware of how close she came to being censored, she was conscious of the censorship of works by D. H. Lawrence, Radclyffe Hall, and Norah James that were contemporaneous with her own.

Marshik's sensitive analysis of Woolf's fictional and nonfictional writings brings out two rather divergent readings of her work. Hoping that her reader will come to an enlightened perspective on censorship and abuses of power independently of authorial direction, Woolf forgoes didacticism, yet her ironic, elliptical style covertly participates in the policing of speech. Marshik finds that Woolf's fiction gives voice to the self-silencing that people engage in even as it refuses to elaborate on "the things people don't say"—a preoccupation of Terence's in The Voyage Out (216). Marshik convincingly argues that Woolf's published texts link the social purity movement to wider social and political ills (including the gendered patriotism that led to the disaster of the Great War). Still, the revisions Woolf made to her novels reveal her participation in the "censorship dialectic." Woolf is perhaps partially redeemed from being implicated in such a breach of faith with the power of her art by the satirizing of both the censor and her own censorious impulses in the comically prudish narrative voice of Orlando.

Marshik's account reveals the challenge made by Woolf to the patriarchal character of social purity discourse, yet it goes against more conventional readings of Woolf (and Bloomsbury as a whole) by suggesting the degree to which she conformed to the demands of the broader culture and the strictures of British law. The chapter succeeds in arguing that Woolf's fears regarding the critical reception of her works constituted more than a mere "personal quirk" (125), although one wonders whether the "censorship dialectic" can entirely account for Woolf's dislike, in the manner of Jacob Flanders, of obscenity "in the raw" (64). Her reaction to the sexually explicit in the writings of Joyce and others may have at least one origin in the class position she was born into. Virginia Woolf's

father, Leslie Stephen, was not just the editor of the Cornhill Magazine, as Marshik reminds us, but the first editor of the Dictionary of National Biography and president of the London Library (beating out Gladstone to replace Tennyson). His father, Sir James Stephen, had been the undersecretary of the Colonial Office, and his brother (Virginia's uncle) was a judge of the High Court. Woolf's ambivalence about Joyce as a writer is partly explained by the prejudices of her class toward the "self-taught working man," as she disparagingly called Joyce in a diary entry that finds such types "ultimately nauseating" (189).

The chapter on Joyce in British Modernism and Censorship covers ground that has been fairly well trod, yet offers some fresh readings of Joyce's scandalous texts. Marshik demonstrates good familiarity with works that address Joyce's relationship to censorship and/or social purity—Cheryl Herr's Joyce's Anatomy of Culture, Tracy Teets Schwarze's Joyce and the Victorians, Paul Vanderham's James Joyce and Censorship, and Katherine Mullin's James Joyce, Sexuality, and Social Purity, to name but a few. The chapter gives us an inside point of view of both the censored author, who willfully misunderstood the laws regarding obscenity while carefully constructing his public personae, and the censor, for whom racial and class prejudice contributed to the decision to ban Ulysses.

In tracing the figure of the prostitute in Joyce's novels, Marshik shows how Joyce deploys the figure as a means of social critique that mirrors the artist's own status as an outcast. Still, Marshik questions Joyce's allegiance to this radical perspective, arguing that there is a conservative streak to his satire. The chapter offers a detailed reading of the "frowsy whore" who appears several times in Ulysses; despite the fact that he has once made an appointment with her, Bloom denigrates the "wretched creature" when in the presence of Stephen and employs the didactic idiom of social purity activists. Marshik finds in Bloom's hostility the "incomplete rebellion of his character against dominant ideologies" (157). This interpretation adds a useful corrective to readings that cast Bloom in an entirely positive light in his resistance to received opinion but neglects the fact that the "Eumaeus" episode as a whole, written in a cliché-ridden style, willfully distorts Bloom's character, making him a stereotype of bourgeois rectitude. Still, given Bloom's initial response to the prostitute in "Sirens," Marshik's claims have merit. In making a connection between the whore and the artist/hero in Ulysses, Marshik might have noted that the description of the prostitute "reconnoitering on her own with the object of bringing

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grist to her mill" (517) in "Eumaeus" recalls Stephen's earlier description of Shakespeare as one for whom "all events brought grist to his mill" (168)—the only other instance of this idiomatic expression in *Ulysses*. Furthermore, considering her interest in the use of "white slave" narratives involving South America in Woolf's *The Voyage Out*, a discussion of Joyce's "Eveline" (*Dubliners*), in which a young girl's suitor offers her the chance to go Buenos Aires, seems a missed opportunity for drawing connections between these two modernists.

The final chapter of British Modernism and Censorship brings to our attention the struggle of Jean Rhys's novels with the figurative and literal morals police (police des moeurs in France) that exercised control over female bodies and texts. Marshik claims that Rhys's career followed the pattern established by Shaw, Woolf, and Joyce in her encounter with the "censorship dialectic." Rather than being subject to overt censorship, however, Rhys experienced a kind of covert censorship when Quartet (first published as Postures in England) was put on the restricted list of circulating libraries, a purgatorial sentence also meted out to Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. (George Moore had railed against this insidious form of suppression as early as 1885 in his Literature at Nurse: Or Circulating Morals—a significant anticensorship manifesto, mention of which might have been liberated by Marshik from her endnotes.) Ironically, Rhys may have escaped government censorship because her novels were not widely available.

Unlike Shaw and Joyce, Rhys suffered for a lack of bad publicity even as she went on to write a novel, Voyages, that vigorously satirizes the reductive thinking of social purists. Although Anna, the protagonist of Voyages, serves as an effective critic of the social purity movement and its spurious moral binaries, Marshik argues that the novel's plot uncomfortably conforms to the narratives of sexual victimhood offered by reformers. Marshik regards the "downward path" taken by Anna from sexual experience to prostitution as being partly motivated by Rhys's desire to give an "honest assessment of her protagonist's chances" (178), which is to say that Rhys's fiction conforms to the determinism of naturalistic fiction. While the economic dice seem loaded against Anna, her own habits of mind also contribute to her undoing; Marshik calls attention to Anna's reading of Zola's Nana—a naturalistic novel that notoriously represents the life of a prostitute. As Marshik notes, because Anna reads Nana at the age of 18, it makes Voyages conform to the warnings of purity activists about the

threat of "obscene" books to young female readers. Anna might be placed in a long line of women represented in literature whose corruption is the product of their wayward reading (from Francesca da Rimini to Emma Bovary), but Marshik's historically specific interpretation gains traction when we learn that *Nana* was censored in England in 1888 as a result of the efforts of social purity leaders.

Rhys's novels were risqué enough to secure their suppression through economic means, but they were just passé enough in their naturalism to be critically neglected, making her case perhaps less exemplary of the "censorship dialectic" than representative of the increasing divide between popular tastes and those of the critical establishment. Marshik suggests that the rhetoric of belatedness that surrounded the reception of Rhys's novels evinces the waning of the "censorship dialectic" as the British government became less willing to prosecute works purported to be obscene in the 1930s. Censorship may have continued into the 1930s—Samuel Beckett makes ironic allusions to the censor in his first novel, *Murphy*—but the changing of the cultural landscape and the advent of new media such as radio and cinema directed the attentions of purity reformers elsewhere.

The threat of censorship and/or suppression during the first half of the last century forced many writers to make compromises with their art, but, as Marshik's study demonstrates, its resistance could potentially be form giving. A hothouse flower never well acclimatized to English soil, British modernism may have actually fared better when the winds of censorship blew hot then when they blew cold. Rather than outrage, it was indifference that would ultimately lead to the decline of modernism in Britain. In its clear-eyed revisionism, British Modernism and Censorship neither valorizes the modernists nor understates the threats they faced from a repressive and coercive culture. This admirable study makes one a little nostalgic for a time when books were generally supposed to have the power to corrupt their readers.

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Modernism's Economy of Creation

Modernism and the Culture of Market Society

by John Xiros Cooper

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. 289 pages

Modernism, Cultural Production, and the British Avant-Garde

by Edward P. Comentale

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. 261 pages

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In contemporary scholarship's forest, chopping the logs of modernism scatters firewood into two main piles: first is the modernism of opposition, where a heroic minority of fine minds tells bourgeois modernity truths it doesn't want to hear in forms it doesn't want to see; second is the modernism of complicity, where lately we've found those same heroic modernists in fact cooperating with modernity's unsavory features from racism to totalitarianism. Two recent works from Cambridge University Press—John Xiros Cooper's Modernism and the Culture of Market Society and Edward P. Comentale's Modernism, Cultural Production, and the British Avant-Garde—engage these twin piles of opposition and complicity, and offer to stack the wood in some provocative ways.

These two studies succeed because they emphasize modernism's connection with its capitalist context. Cooper looks at the modernist scene through a lens borrowed from Georg Lukacs and describes the lived experience of reification, the impossibility of any art escaping reification's gravity. Comentale offers something more sanguine (if less likely) in his argument that the modernists we've celebrated actually affirm capitalism, while the modernists we've overlooked offer a constructive alternative to market society.

Other important studies have investigated this tension between modernism and modernity. Focused scholarship from Lawrence Rainey and Joyce Piell Wexler has investigated modernism's publishing and financial context, while broader studies from Vincent Pecora, Michael North, and (most recently) Peter Gay have asked us to reconsider the received wisdom that high modernism is a reaction against modernity's mass culture

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or amorality or mechanization. You could say there is a whole critical industry that first feels modernism ought to be unfailingly critical of modernity, and second vents its disappointment when texts turn out to be "complicit" or "affirmative" or otherwise embroiled with bourgeois, liberal, capitalist, imperialist, patriarchal Britain. Is it the Wilcoxes and the Schlegels again at crossed swords? Yes, but it's more than that, because modernist studies has lately claimed for its target much more than the exhaustion of liberal politics and economics. Contemporary modernist criticism tracks changing subject position and shifting class relations in an evolving society to investigate art's relation to subjectivity under pressure from forces of economy, history, and desire. So Cooper's and Comentale's work rolls down a road prepared by modernist scholars who take not only art but society as their project.

9

Cooper's Modernism and the Culture of Market Society aims to reread modernism's relation to capitalism. Whether you'll think Cooper's work hits that target or misses it will depend on your response first to the Lukacsean logic of his readings and second to his broad range of authors. Cooper writes, "I want to locate modernism in the context of the material and socioeconomic history" (28), and for him this context means a particular phase of capitalism: market society. Following the Lukacs of History and Class Consciousness and especially Theory of the Novel, Cooper shows the avant-garde revolutions of 100 years ago to be tied directly to the social reorganizations of a society wholly shaped by economic exchange. But his is not a vulgar base-superstructure argument. Instead, he aims to unpack the irony that early modernists were unwitting revolutionaries of capitalism because they opened a hidebound culture to life beyond old moralities. Further, while modernism's techniques were deployed in resistance to capitalism, those same techniques—collage, anachronic narrative, irony, novelty-became the cultural style of mass-market capitalism. In this sense, Cooper disallows the familiar reading of an heroic modernism as an elite and determined resistance to mass capital and replaces it with modernism as "the key symptom of the transition" (21) from precapitalism to capitalism. So modernists occupied a crucial moment of transition, but not necessarily as the oppositional force we have imagined. The heart of this book is the beating paradox that these artists-leading lights like

Pound, Lewis, Eliot, and the broader cast of Gertrude Stein, Djuna Barnes, and even Lewis Carroll—saw themselves as resisting commercialism all the while they were modeling the social organizations and outlooks that commercialism demanded. However, Cooper does not want to cast the modernists as dupes of capital; he says they were also engaged in a struggle against market society. The idea is that modernist art and modernists' bohemian daily life can be at the same time cultural resistance and "the cultural spearhead of capitalism." That paradoxical idea is tested in three main readings.

Modernism and the Culture of Market Society reads Wyndham Lewis's Tarr, Eliot's The Waste Land, and Joyce's Ulysses in depth. These readings come last, in the book's final third, with the first part of the book a theorization of market society and the second part an intense look at nineteenth-century responses to capitalism from Marx to Flaubert to Alice in Wonderland. The primary thing a reader will note is Cooper's booming voice—Falstaff in the faculty lounge—unusual for academic prose in its directness, humor, and irritability. I like it very much. Cooper says things like "My specific argument then is simple . . ." and "Let me suggest a new path to the study of modernism." The reader feels confidently guided and clearly placed throughout. Cooper's is the confident voice of a writer who would connect modernist aesthetics with the modern social context and draw the line from those days to these with mention of academic hypocrisy, television advertising, George W. Bush, and hip-hop.

While this range of readings charms, it does not always satisfy. A weakness of Cooper's work is that in his laudable desire to be pertinent, he fills the cup of his argument from so many sources that the resulting brew is too contrary to swallow. Thus, for Cooper, modernism includes Flaubert and Marx, Melville and Brontë, Lewis Carroll and Oscar Wilde atop the usual suspects of Eliot and Joyce and Lawrence and Woolf and the rest. Moreover, Cooper's range of reference points includes popular culture talk of Ikea, the Iraq war, Acura ads, and greedy MBAs. Of course we are all interested in efforts to broaden the definition of modernism, but that's not really what all this does. Ultimately, these clever references all make the same point—that the ubiquity of market relations shapes the lifeworld of twentieth-century Europe. The broad range of Cooper's intelligence leads one to appreciate his learning and simultaneously to fear that he has deposited every last clever thought from the seminar table in this one volume.

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Modernism and the Culture of Market Society is at its best where it yokes diverse references to fully elaborated readings. Thus, the book's payoff is surely the three chapters of Joyce, Eliot, and Lewis interpretations. Cooper's analysis of The Waste Land, for instance, offers a new look at that canonical poem through the lens of market society. Of course, Eliot scholars have long hit on the commercial values that the poem both laments and includes, but Cooper's hermeneutic offers us more. This chapter, "History and the Postpsychological Self in The Waste Land," charts the flattening of history into a constant modern present. In what is generally an observation about postmodernity, Cooper shows the negation of history's significance to Eliot's poem of historical fragments and shows its root in the market culture that is only flowering fully now. Further, he investigates the gradual dissolution of character in Eliot's early poetry and its full dissolution in The Waste Land. While this reprises Hugh Kenner's argument in The Invisible Poet, Cooper adds real value with his close readings, which show how modern character becomes a text to be edited endlessly instead of any unity or even a Freudian depth-model psyche.

So contrary to Eliot's famous essay in the Dial, The Waste Land is far from offering ordering principles to the futility and anarchy of postwar Europe. Rather, it follows market society in dehistoricizing and detaching the individual from any meaningful engagement with full being and delivers us ourselves—disconnected, multiple, incomplete. Cooper's overarching point is a good one: the The Waste Land presents us the image of market society's person as insignificant and transparent, rendered here as the lost lyric center for a poem that at once protests market society and anticipates its values. Thus, without perhaps intending it, Cooper's market modernism runs Eliot straight into postmodernity with all its unlamented wholes, logic of late capitalism, and Lacanian construction of the subject.

Another strong reading in Modernism and the Culture of Market Society offers scholars more reason to appreciate The Enemy—Wyndham Lewis. Cooper rereads Lewis as a sensitive instrument, a sort of seismograph tuned to the reifying quakes of market society. Take for example that bright periodical BLAST, which most of us know in its big-lettered, pink reprint from Black Sparrow. BLAST's radical critique of English middle-brow culture became mainstream advertising's style by the mid-1920s. Again, the modernism of opposition was redeployed as market culture's

signature. But Cooper insists that Lewis's modernism was not co-opted by market society; rather, the avant-garde culture of rebellious innovation was equally and always the culture of all modernity. It is apparent in both Cooper and Comentale's work that Wyndham Lewis remains the lightning rod in contemporary scholarship that he was in life.

Fredric Jameson's Fables of Aggression tells us to read Lewis as a political artist of scandalous politics—from his sexism and jingoism to his affinity for totalitarian solutions. Cooper certainly develops these themes, but he also gives us Lewis as a guide to the trembling fate of subjectivity in the regime of market society. This makes for some useful contrasts to better-known modernist enterprises. In Tarr Cooper has a text that shows Lewis aiming to blast stream of consciousness as a retreat into subjectivity and to offer instead subjectivity turned inside out in a public show of self to the world. Contrary to the "inward turn" school of modernism, Lewis sought to clear a space beyond the bourgeois self. This is a provocative reading, especially when it points the finger at Woolf and Joyce for "making of consciousness the Joycean black hole into which all the external world disappears" (218). For Cooper, Lewis is heroic in his resistance to the illusion of a private self presented by Joyce's and Woolf's ornamental interiors.

Finally, a point significant to contemporary modernist studies is that Lewis rages against the culture that no longer embraces the artist and at the same time illuminates the cultural dynamic that opens the door for inclusiveness of race, gender, and sexual orientation. Cooper writes:

the conditions in which art lost touch with res publica, a public space increasingly transformed into a series of private noetic groupings, was more easily a condition in which women artists, homosexuals, and intellectuals seemed immediately more comfortable than heterosexual men. (224)

The contention is that Lewis can show us the point where a mainstream culture of artistic achievement turned its back on the avant-garde, and while that separation represents for Lewis a loss of traction, for other artists the resulting space is a comfortable opportunity. Here Cooper's reading of Lewis sheds light on figures like Djuna Barnes, Gertrude Stein, E. M. Forster, and the Bloomsbury group, all of whom were energized into what a recent collection calls *Bad Modernisms*, and even what Daphne

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Brooks calls *Bodies in Dissent*. Cooper's materialist lens offers real insight into Lewis's troubled and troubling genius. To see Lewis raging first against modernity and second against his own white, male, heterosexual impotence is to see market culture's onward surge and its overlooked benefits.

Cooper's short final chapter, "Bloomsbury Nation," charts this well-known London avant-garde's withdrawal from philistine society into a sympathetic group—a "noetic community"—that allows a lifestyle independent both of Victorian mores and modern commercialism. Ironically, Woolf's, Fry's, Strachey's, and Bell's self-constructions allowed new daily life and experimental fiction but also were the tools for the same social changes that market society demanded. Cooper nails this strange contrast between expectations and results in these lines:

The experience of authenticity within the bohemian enclave gains substance by contrast to philistine society. But the contrast is really with the remains of traditional manners and mores rather than with the culture of freebooting entrepreneurs. What is sensed as narrow, artificial, and desensitized in modern times is not the capitalist order but the old forms of relationship, conduct, and ritual which capitalism and modernism, in their different ways, are putting to the sword. (221)

Here bourgeois society is the target, but the modernist knife frees market capitalism from the fetters of outworn morality. Behold, another dialectic of modernity.

In sum, Cooper repositions the avant-garde in early twentieth-century modernism. The traditional definition of the modernists as outsiders to crass commerce and gadflies to bourgeois proprieties misses the mark as completely as the recent studies that emphasize modernism's complicity with market values and bourgeois hierarchies. Cooper's *Modernism and the Culture of Market Society* has it both ways by showing early twentieth-century Paris and London as capitalist regimes clinging with bad faith to outworn social conventions while modernist artists offer real protests to reifying capitalism's hegemony, but in life and art topple the social conventions that resist market society's total dominance of the lifeworld.

9

Edward Comentale's Modernism, Cultural Production, and the British Avant-Garde does similar work differently. This study also focuses on the links between capitalism and modernist art, but Comentale distinguishes between High Modernist stalwarts he finds complicit in capitalist domination and a handful of avant-garde figures he says resist the spread of deleterious market values. The dramatis personae include many of the usual suspects—Eliot, Woolf, Marinetti, Hulme—and a few new faces—Wilfred Owen, H.D., Henri Gaudier-Brzeska. Modernism, Cultural Production, and the British Avant-Garde makes an ambitious argument for reconsidering modernism's relation to its context of bourgeois, capitalist production. Whereas Cooper finds market patterns in all modernism, Comentale aims to separate avant-garde sheep from High Modernist goats (the capital H and M, by the way, are his). I don't accept all of Comentale's distinctions, but I do find his comparing and contrasting a useful way into central debates in modernist studies.

The key terms for Modernism, Cultural Production, and British Avant-Garde are those old favorites romanticism and classicism, and the author casts himself in the Hulmean mold, decrying a romantic modernism for its excess and championing a classical modernism for the social and aesthetic solutions it offers. Indeed, the book is organized along these lines: the first part, "Critique," unmasks Woolf's and Eliot's romantic modernism, and the second part, "Connection," introduces classical modernism with Hulme as John the Baptist to Gaudier-Brzeska's Christ. Overall, Comentale's book will stand or fall according to his claim for an evolution from High Modernism's abstract metaphysics to the avant-garde's viable political strategy.

So that's the book's claim and architecture—let's look at the particulars. According to Comentale, romantic modernism follows Pater into a dangerous fixation on form. From Joyce's "Circe" to Roger Fry's and Clive Bell's "significant form" to Eliot's Four Quartets, the dominant mode of modernism aspires to the condition of music. Alternatively, classical modernism "approaches the condition of sculpture, the art of shaping a resistant matter" (20). So while Pound and Eliot and Lewis tumbled into a reactionary, rearguard classicism, the better "living classicism" provides for a utopian relation in politics and aesthetics where alterities are left intact but meaningful exchange remains possible.

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This approach brings us back to the image of modernism as split between resistance and complicity. Comentale believes he has landed upon a method that pegs some modernists as resisters to and others as collaborators with the bourgeois, capitalist order. Clearly this effort both aligns Modernism, Cultural Production, and the British Avant-Garde with Cooper's Modernism and the Culture of Market Society and distinguishes it. The fundamental effect of Comentale's two "Critique" chapters is showing Bloomsbury High Modernism and T. S. Eliot to be "affirmative" in Marcuse's sense of reinforcing capital's substantive forms and daily affect as normal and inevitable. Comentale's theoretical underpinnings are sound if intricate, and useful if not dazzlingly new. In his discussion of Roger Fry, Comentale argues convincingly that real revolution in early twentieth-century London came not from Bloomsbury intellectuals but from middle-class capitalists, and slightly less convincingly that fascism and liberalism are tied together, and their commonalities also underpin futurism and Bloomsbury's essential complicity with market forces. If that sounds like a lot, it is, and it requires acrobatic leaps of argument and tight turns of attention to keep all these congruities in their proper order. Ultimately, we arrive where Raymond Williams brought us when he called Bloomsbury the shock troops of the bourgeoisie. If we follow Jameson's old call to "always historicize," we will inevitably find art in unsavory connection to economy—the best questions are those that inquire into art's capacity to resist that economy's injustices.

The book is at its most convincing in sustained discussions like the Eliot chapter. In these spaces the author develops close readings and escapes the labyrinthine demands of tying modernisms to politics to movements to individuals. Like Cooper, Comentale finds in Eliot a vigorous (if slantways) "critique of economic modernity" (70). But, not surprisingly by now, the poetry and the criticism contain a contradiction, and that contradiction is that the solutions Old Possum proffers are themselves market-driven. So, for instance, "Prufrock" seems to lament modern isolation and meaninglessness, but in its form and its conclusion avoids real resistance to the reification that causes it all. And if "Prufrock" at least seems dissatisfied with the reified lifeworld, Four Quartets presents the soul after full capitulation. Eliot's "work, while seeming to preserve a certain critical distance in relation to modernity, finds solace in mimicry of the ideological and structural principles that sustain the modern economy at large" (72). In short, Eliot is complicit.

I very much like the way Comentale reads *The Waste Land* through Eliot's Protestantism and work in Lloyd's Bank. This may sound like Weber at a poetry reading, but actually the mix delivers some engaging insights while only occasionally stumbling into infelicities. Frankfurt School materialism is a fine tool in Comentale's hands, and he uses it to craft excellent points about the drumbeat of reification behind modernism's tune. Comentale emphasizes that market forces are lived in modernity as a rationalized rule of equivalence and a standardization of human activity. So human beings see greater freedoms prepackaged according to market-society needs. Comentale's approach looks back along with Cooper to Weber and Lukacs, but looks forward to a fuller theorization of modernist literature's response to war and industrialism in shapes as different as *The Waste Land* and *Tarr*.

An example of poetry shaped by industrial society is Comentale's reading of The Waste Land as itself a bureaucracy. He argues that the poem's tangled structure affirms the same modern qualities the poem appears to criticize. The poem's mercantile themes and economic punning bring together an investor's suffering with an ascetic's longing. Here, then, is the combination of banking and Protestantism. But what the poem does, according to Comentale, is generate a rhetoric of sacrifice—when Phlebas and the Grail Knight suffer to renew the whole community but curiously this sacrifice brings neither true community nor true individualism, and the reader is left prostrate before Eliot's static, alienating order. So in The Waste Land as in market society, "individual voices are subsumed into larger, nonhuman patterns and complex contingencies are organized by an efficient apparatus" (104). In the end, Comentale is rather tough on High Modernism, which "proffers as normative what is quite simply exploitative" (109), because he has an alternative in mind—classical modernism. This is not Eliot's gesture toward classicism but an ideal fully realized in Hulme, Gaudier-Brzeska, and H.D.

This brings us to T. E. Hulme, classical modernism's unruly philosopher, sacrifice, and bouncer. Here again Comentale's desire to track filigreed subtleties obscures his central argument—this time it is Hulme's tangled inheritance from Bergson and its relation to liberalism. That said, Comentale's goal is rhetorically straightforward: trace Hulme's key philosophical elements—especially materialism brought first to language and then to Bergson—and then show these elements realized in powerful ways in Gaudier-Brzeska's sculpture and H.D.'s poetry. For Comentale,

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Hulme's poetry notably balances imagist force with powerful form, and in these complementary powers comes to the reader like a sculpture. This model of production is an alternative to the blind and constant making of the bourgeois world. So the book's move from "Critique" to "Construction" is the move from a problem to a solution. Enter Henri Gaudier-Brzeska.

The Gaudier-Brzeska chapter connects labor, World War I, and sculpture. First, Comentale offers some of the lightning insights that are the best part of this book, for instance his provocative reading of World War I as the expression of bourgeois self-hatred and his argument that what critics have taken to be homosexual desire in war poetry is another expression of the contradictions of the market economy. While Wilfred Owens's well-known war poetry displays the former symptoms, Gaudier-Brzeska's sculpture represents a productive, forward-looking response both to capitalism and the war. Gaudier-Brzeska epitomizes classical modernism: "his work shifts our focus from the ego to its material relations; it replaces lyricism with sculpture, hero-worship with community, and destruction with the ability to discriminate" (178). With helpful photographs, Comentale shows that Gauder-Brzeska's sculpture is a move away from the lyrical subjectivity in Yeats and Eliot and a move toward "a reconciliation of ego and world." Self and material merge, acknowledging the influence of context on consciousness, in this alternative, classical modernism. The reclaimed Gaudier-Brzeska brings us human experience as social experience, but the High Modernists withdraw into aestheticism or coteries.

Throughout, Comentale asks us to consider Adorno in support of his classicism. Adorno offers a theory of art contiguous with what Comentale sees the avant-garde performing under Hulme's influence. Namely, Hulme and Adorno both gesture toward a resistant negative dialectics of artistic production. This is not Eliot's affirmative form but an art that exists to show the impossible contradictions of bourgeois society and to suggest without producing Adorno's "life as it ought to be." Adorno seems a fine addition to this conversation on Hulme and the avant-garde. But looking backward a chapter, doesn't the logic of Adorno tell us that the formal exuberance of Eliot's *The Waste Land* is exactly what makes it unreifiable? A struggle across this book is that the analysis often joins poetry to market in ways that stretch credibility. By Adorno's logic, isn't this poem a totem of modernist resistance to any mass-produced and false totality, instead of Comentale's affirmative fool to capital?

In the final chapter Comentale joins the Edwardian and Georgian suffragette campaigns to his ideal of classical modernism. Both Cooper and Comentale have an interpretive key that becomes a kind of talisman, a device by which to explain all and avoid problematic inconsistencies. For Cooper that talisman is something called "market society," while Comentale's charm, the carefully sculpted "classical modernism," is a welcome alternative to the grim tale of modernity as a theater of alienation and violence. For suffragettes like the Pankhursts and Jane Harrison, classicism presented an alternative order to modernity's oppressive rationalism. Comentale's recurring argument is that the suffragette protests-from wire cutting to sexual restraint—are inflected by implicit and explicit critiques of capitalist, liberal society. The chapter and the book conclude with the assertion that H.D.'s poetry and the suffragette unification of mind and matter anticipate Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. The modern subject is not a Cartesian satellite but a part of the physical world. Comentale's move toward an antidualist epistemology and politics is a good one, though shoehorning it into a five-page conclusion is not. It's too bad that Comentale is occasionally given to asserting more than demonstrating, since the ideas about Bergson or suffragettes are provocative but, in this form, not convincing. Indeed, this conclusion, with all its merit, symbolizes what's best and worst about Modernism, Cultural Production, and the British Avant-Garde: the multiplicity of its referents and the velocity of its conclusions.



John Xiros Cooper's Modernism and the Culture of Market Society and Edward P. Comentale's Modernism, Cultural Production, and the British Avant-Garde are different similar books. For Cooper modernists were unwitting revolutionaries of capital because they opened society, for better and worse, to life beyond old moralities. For Comentale modernism is equally shaped by market capitalism, but within modernism one faction perpetuates the values of bourgeois instrumentality while another faction envisions a viable social and aesthetic alternative. Readers of the materialist persuasion will appreciate this scholarship's debt to Lukacs, Weber, and the Frankfurt School, while students of modernism more generally will like its range of modernist texts and contexts. These works are worthy additions to the scholarly tradition that theorizes a mix of text and context in,

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for example, Jameson's Political Unconscious, Vincent Pecora's Self and Form in Modern Narrative, and Michael Levenson's A Genealogy of Modernism.

Alas, just as these two studies model some of contemporary criticism's strengths, they also display some of its weaknesses. Set together, Cooper's and Comentale's works contrast the writing of the tenured professor with that of the assistant professor. I'm not being ad hominem here, I'm observing the material conditions that lead one to take a long, leisured survey of the landscape and make the other focus intently on the details. Each approach has its shortcomings, and we see them across the library of scholarly books: the big book by the senior academic with its horizonless unpacking of information that wants editing; the little book by the young scholar displaying uneven fascination with minutiae and plenty of footnotes. Recent exceptions to this rule—Michael Wood's Literature and the Taste of Knowledge or Jed Esty's A Shrinking Island—are more welcome than ever. And one more cavil-who titles these books? Modernism and the Culture of Market Society and Modernism, Cultural Production, and the British Avant-Garde are less names than lists. These lists become a blur of signifiers, abstractions familiar from the journals but not distinct enough to make an impression. It's like naming your children from some family anagram: Kirsten, Kirsty, Kristy, Kristen. Please, someone, bring back the incisive title-Gone Primitive, Fables of Aggression, The Country and the City—if only so weary readers can tell the books apart.

With that off my chest, let me say that these books do important work. Most notably, they ask if modernism is the last refuge from market forces or if it is actually the expression of market forces penetrating art. It's no surprise, then, that Lukacs underpins Cooper's dialectical pessimism and Adorno appears in Comentale's more hopeful gestures. But probably more important than tracing these old influences is noting the dramatic direction that modernist studies is taking, thanks in part to the vigorous Modernist Studies Association that both authors mention and thanks more generally to the growing catholicity of English as a discipline. Cooper and Comentale explore new terrain in sculpture, poetics, popular politics, and sectarian aesthetics while revising our received maps of familiar writing by Eliot and Woolf and Joyce and Stein.

Hegel famously called the novel "the middle-class epic," and if avantgarde sculpture and poetry aren't quite the same as the comfortable realistic novel, they appear to be caught in another part of the same web. Comentale's and Cooper's books strive in different ways to reckon with

the economic factors behind the social forms we study. While they may not be groundbreaking works, they do offer thoughtful recalibrations of the art that responds to modernity, whether in protest or in profit. These two studies affirm the importance of scholarship that treats directly with the instrumentalizing power of modern capitalism. I would never say that this is the only story of modernism, but it is surely an important one.

Call for Papers

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The editors of *Lore*, an e-journal, are seeking submissions for a special issue dedicated to exploring the intersections of literature and composition. We will be accepting submissions of traditional scholarly inquiries (4,000 to 7,000 words) and shorter reflective pieces (500 to 2,000 words).

Regardless of one's individual affiliations to literature or composition, the political, pedagogical, and intellectual intersections of these fields are particularly fraught for the newest community members of English studies. One the one hand, graduate students, adjunct instructors, and new faculty who identify as specialists in literature are aware of the schism between the training they receive as literary scholars and the pedagogical skills and theory they need to effectively teach composition. One the other hand, specialists in composition are trained to deal with student writing yet must wrestle with the contested status of literary texts in the writing curriculum. The editors of *Lore* seek texts that address this gap in understanding between the seemingly disparate—but always interrelated—fields of writing and literature. We hope to solicit contributions from both literature and composition specialists.

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How are the fields of literature and writing interrelated?

How does the study of literature influence research in composition?

How does the study of composition influence research in literature?

Professional Issues at the Crossroads of Literature and Composition
How does each field cast its identity?
How is the membership of each side different? Or the same?
How does the divide between the two fields shape an English department?

We are accepting both proposals (~500 words) and complete manuscripts. Email submissions to Colleen Foley (cmfoley@udel.edu) or Kate Huber (kmh@udel.edu) as a Word document, PDF, or web-authored text (in HTML). Please follow the MLA documentation format.



Capote and the Trillings: Homophobia and Literary Culture at Midcentury

Jeff Solomon

In a reminiscence published in George Plimpton's oral history of Truman Capote, Diana Trilling recounts her and her husband Lionel's first meeting with Capote, almost certainly in August 1946, about 16 months before Capote published his first novel, Other Voices, Other Rooms. That August, Capote was a 21-year-old writer who had published several wellreceived stories (among them "Miriam" and "A Tree of Night") and had just been featured in a photo-essay on the Yaddo arts colony in the 15 July 1946 issue of Life magazine (Larsen). This promising start could have been appreciably helped or hindered by either of the Trillings, who were a power couple of their day. Both were prominent members of the New York Intellectuals, the cosmopolitan group of cultural and political writers who, broadly speaking, were born poor and Jewish, became active in the anti-Stalinist Old Left as college students in the 1930s, and set the tone and subject of much of the intellectual discussion of the 1940s and 50s.1 Diana Trilling had written a weekly book review column in The Nation since 1941; would come to write for The New Yorker, Atlantic, Saturday Review, and Partisan Review; and would continue to publish into the 1990s. She was always best known, however, as the wife of Lionel Trilling, literary critic, fiction writer, and professor at Columbia University. By 1946, Lionel had published books on Matthew Arnold and E. M. Forster, as well as many of the essays that would be collected in the influential The Liberal Imagination, which established him as a public intellectual in the mold of George Orwell and Edmund Wilson.

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Diana tells how Capote introduced himself to her in Grand Central Station, Lionel having gone to buy tickets; Capote recognized her from a photograph in the home of his friend Leo Lerman.² Then the three of them sat together on the train.

Here was this little creature, odd-looking and with his extraordinary squeaky voice, very high-pitched and very resonant: it carried the length of the car. So he sat opposite Lionel and me and proceeded to ask questions about Lionel's book on E. M. Forster. Truman wanted to know why it was that Lionel had ignored Forster's homosexuality. Now this was not only a bold question to put at the top of his shrill voice in a very crowded car in those days [sic]. I remember having very mixed feelings. One: wishing he would shut up and go away, because I was embarrassed and I thought there was going to be a lynching in the car. I was afraid people would do something. I could see that they were uncomfortable, angry at him, very angry. Truman wasn't watching or if he was he didn't let on. But the other thing was that I was extraordinarily impressed by him. . . . It was a very impressive first view.

He asked Lionel the question very directly: "Why did you not treat Forster's homosexuality in the book?"

"I didn't know about it."

Truman said, "Well, didn't you hear about it?"

"No," said Lionel. "I had not heard about it. I know nothing about his life."

Truman said, "Well, didn't you guess it?"

Lionel said, "Yes, as I was writing my book, it began to dawn on me that probably he was homosexual."

"Then why didn't you write about it?"

"Because it didn't seem to concern me very much. I wasn't very interested in it."

Truman simply thought that was *impossible*. Lionel said that it was exactly possible. (Plimpton 70; italics in original)

This oral history is the fullest account of Capote's encounter with the Trillings in print. Diana's fascination with Capote, Capote's with Lionel, and Lionel's dismissal of Capote are also referenced in Diana's book *The Beginning of the Journey* and in two letters written by Capote shortly after

his trip, one to Mary Louise Aswell and the other to Leo Lerman (both discussed later in this essay). Lionel continued his dismissal of Capote by leaving no record of the incident.

These various records (and absence of record) offer different perspectives on a clash among three individuals from different textual traditions who resisted the social order in very different ways. First, the Man of Culture whose explication of liberal humanism made him the first Jew given tenure in the notably anti-Semitic English department of Columbia University.³ Second, the Faithful Wife who insisted on subordinating herself to her husband yet aggressively situated her intellectual production on the masculine side of the various gendered binaries operating in the publishing world and literary culture of her time. Last, the Homosexual Writer who from the feminine side of those binaries turned his homosexuality into a marketable good at a time when assertions of homosexuality outside of private contexts were met with censorship, derision, and oppression. All three believed that literature could and should challenge the dominant ideology, especially on behalf of the individual, yet each reached a different reckoning of how this challenge might be met, and to what end. All three personally resisted social hegemony, but in three distinct registers: ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. None of the three can be easily reduced to one school or philosophy, and all three are known for the subtle gradations and self-conscious contradictions of their work. The mingled sympathy and antipathy of these literary players made them interesting to each other and fueled their conflict on the train.

My goal in this article is to use reactions to Capote's persona and work by Diana and Leonard Trilling—and to a lesser extent by two other midcentury critics, Leslie Fiedler and Elizabeth Hardwick—as an exemplar of the complex relations between literary culture and homophobia at midcentury. What exactly happens when Capote forces the Trillings' attention to a blind spot of liberal humanism: the exclusion of issues of gender and sexuality from serious consideration? I will show that when Capote confronts the Trillings on the train, he attacks their identity as literary and social critics committed to literature as a tool for social justice, capable of questioning both their own and their society's preconceptions, and sensitive to prejudice by virtue of their heritage and, in Diana's case, by her gender. The battle is waged on the Trillings' home ground—the field of rigorous close reading and the ethical responsibility of the literary critic—but the Trillings find themselves resisting rather than promoting

basic principles of liberal humanism. The skirmish offers an object lesson in how homophobia was negotiated by the liberal intelligentsia: how it was performed, how it was leavened by gender, and how a false reconciliation with humanist ideology was psychologically managed.

While the homophobia of the New York Intellectuals and the New Critics is received wisdom, its particulars are not. In the decades after midcentury, some of these critics would temper their views precisely because outspoken figures like Capote forced a confrontation. By articulating how challenges to homophobia percolated though literary culture, we may see the beginnings of the cultural change spurred by individual encounters as well as by more collective acts of protest. In addition, I wish to complicate the charges of presentism often used to defend these critics—a dismissal made specious by Capote's challenge on the train. Certainly the constraints under which earlier generations wrote should not be forgotten. Yet if Capote, in 1946, may point to the studied ignorance of homosexuality in Lionel Trilling's work, we may certainly do the same. Furthermore, if Diana Trilling and other midcentury critics chose to discuss Capote's sexuality, it is certainly appropriate to examine how.

A secondary aim of this article is to question the current standing of Capote in current literary, gay, lesbian, and queer studies. When I offer Capote as a forerunner of the gay and lesbian rights movements, I contradict the standard reading of Capote as a careerist apolitical aesthete, and celebrity qua celebrity. The politics and political impact of Capote as a best-selling, critically respected, and openly gay author who frequently wrote about homosexuality throughout his career have been neglected. Consider the only two anthologies of Capote criticism, the Waldmeirs' Critical Response to Truman Capote and the Truman Capote volume of Harold Bloom's Modern Critical Views series, both of which consistently reference Capote's flamboyant celebrity but contain only a few speculations on his political intent and impact.4 In addition, Capote criticism in general favors In Cold Blood, his hard-boiled work of creative nonfiction about the murderers of a prototypical Midwestern family, which was his biggest seller and last complete extended narrative.5 More than half of the articles in Bloom's anthology are concerned with In Cold Blood; the Waldmeir anthology is more balanced but still favors Blood. The recent biographical films Capote and Infamous share with the anthologies a preoccupation with both Capote's celebrity and Blood. For their dramatic tension, both films rely on the contrast between Capote's flamboyant ef-

feminacy and his butch narration of manly killers Perry Smith and Dick Hickock, which both films resolve through Capote's exploitation-cumfriendship-cum-romance of both the killers and his assistant, the writer Harper Lee. The films therefore celebrate Capote while also portraying him in the homophobic tradition as a manipulative exploiter of troubled working-class straight men and devoted women—a stereotypical assessment which in this instance is probably valid, if reductive.

Yet In Cold Blood is atypical of Capote's work in having a homosexual subtext rather than overt gay concerns. What is commonly called Capote's "early" writing but is actually the bulk of his completed work—the novels Other Voices, Other Rooms, The Grass Harp, and Breakfast at Tiffany's, and the short stories collected in A Tree of Night—frequently includes overtly homosexual characters and homosexual themes. Just as director Blake Edwards straightened the narrator of Breakfast at Tiffany's in the film adaptation, so literary critics have kept Capote's homosexuality at arm's length, preferring his most "masculine" work, acknowledging his homosexuality but exhibiting as little interest in the interaction between Capote's sexuality and his work as Lionel Trilling did in Forster's.

Neglect of Capote's corpus and persona extends past mainstream literary criticism into critical subgenres that might reasonably be expected to discuss and value him. Why have gay, lesbian, and queer scholars been reluctant to claim him and engage with his work? First, not only does his debut antedate the homophile and gay liberation movements, placing his early career off the usual historical trajectory, but also his public persona—which progressively overshadowed his writing, transforming him in the mass media from a celebrated author into a pure celebritycan easily be seen as the cliché against which these movements defined themselves.6 From his debut, Capote offered a performance of shock, spectacle, and scandal that was antithetical to the homophile movement, which was preoccupied with the quest for homosexual men and women to be seen as respectable, unexceptional members of society. Conversely, gay liberationists in the 60s and 70s who affiliated themselves with the counterculture were likely to find Capote—a fixture on talk shows and charter member of the jet set-an Establishment figure to be ignored if not repudiated. Capote's televised gender nonconformity, frequent public intoxication, and expertise at vicious gossip were understood as an embodiment of the homophobic stereotypes these liberationists struggled to defeat.7

Capote's work was as unpalatable as his person to many gay and lesbian activists and scholars, especially those of the Stonewall generation. His fiction's coupling of homosexuality with effeminacy and its preoccupation with the deep psychological trauma of internalized homophobia didn't mesh happily with the needs of those men and women who were fighting to delist homosexuality from the American Psychiatric Association's manual of mental disorders. Furthermore, Capote's interest in the psyches of queer and homosexual children was difficult to parse at a time when gays and lesbians were struggling to prove that homosexuality was not a result of early trauma or a stage of arrested development, when gay children made no ping on the radar of the gay and lesbian movement, and when gays and lesbians were frequently collated with pedophiles.⁸

Claude Summers's well-respected and oft-cited Gay Fictions: Wilde to Stonewall offers an example of the poor fit between Capote and the ideology of gay and lesbian studies. Summers's dismissal of Capote is evident in the page count: Capote warrants less than four pages, compared to 25 for Tennessee Williams and 20 for Gore Vidal. Nonetheless, Summers grants Capote half a chapter title—"The Early Fiction of Truman Capote and Tennessee Williams"—presumably because the historical importance of Capote to twentieth-century gays and gay fictions demands it. This inconsistency of representation is a measure of Summers's (and the field's) discomfort with Capote.

For Summers, Capote is the inferior face of the inferior school of midcentury gay representation. Summers sets up an opposition between Gore Vidal's The City and the Pillar and the work of Southerners Capote and Tennessee Williams. Vidal offers "a significant contribution to the literature of homosexuality" because The City shows that "homosexuality is a normal variation of human behavior" (128-29).9 Conversely, Capote and Williams, under the influence of Carson McCullers, "reveled in the extraordinariness of their exotic-even freakish-characters" and presented homosexuality "less as a social problem than as a manifestation of love's essential irrationality" (130). Capote is the worst of the three Southern writers because his art is inferior (a charge Summers pronounces but does not argue) and because his vision of homosexuality is objectionable. Other Voices, Other Rooms lacks the "philosophical seriousness and sure vision of McCullers's work" (131) and is "muddled and sensational [while] Williams's gay fictions are altogether more affirmative" (25). 10 While Capote "reduces homosexuality to the status of an affliction . . . a fearful

and tormented flight of fantasy" (133), Williams "documents the cruelty and oppression suffered by gay people in mid-century America" (25) and makes "strong and healthy contributions to the literature of compassion" (133).

Summers makes this last claim while discussing "Desire and the Black Masseur," where a masseur beats his willing client and in this way brings him to his first orgasm. 11 The abuse escalates until the masseur kills the client and eats his corpse. I agree with Summers that the story is an "allegory of the effects of guilt and feelings of unworthiness" (139), but I question why Summers finds this story more affirming than Other Voices, which doesn't draw nearly as close a correspondence between homosexuality, pain, and death. Summers's primary objection to Other Voices seems to be that the novel offers "homosexuality [as] a negation of masculinity, not simply because it involves effeminacy and transvestitism but also, and most importantly, because it signifies passive resignation and despair" (132). By contrast, in "Desire," the masochism of the client is balanced by the virility of the masseur. In other words, Summers's actual objection to Other Voices is that the novel is too weak, childish, and "girly"—a charge that accords with Capote's persona, which is considerably more womanish than Williams's. By Summers's active, manly, and affirming rubric—a common rubric in gay studies—Capote fails.

The later generation of scholars who work in the disciplinary context of queer studies and hold as an overriding principle the constructedness of all gender and sexuality has not found Capote much more appealing. Generally speaking, queer theorists have been invested in uncovering queer aspects of the "normal" and challenging set categories such as gay, lesbian, and heterosexual. Even though Capote's public performance of effeminacy puts the categories of male and female under stress, he has not inspired much queer scholarship. This is most likely due to his continued popularity as a gay writer and celebrity. Capote was one of most famous writers in the United States throughout his long career, and his public reputation has never been eclipsed. His unexpected death in 1984 was followed by a media blitz that was repeated with the posthumous publication of his incomplete opus Answered Prayers and the positive reception to his authorized biography (Clarke), both best sellers. The biographical play Tru won a Tony in 1989; a televised performance won an Emmy in 1992. George Plimpton's 1997 oral history placed Capote back on the bestseller list, and in the 2000s, Random House released a spate of Capote

material: his collected short stories (2004), his collected letters (2004), his abandoned attempt at a first novel (2005), and his collected essays (2007), all of which prompted retrospectives of Capote's person and work in the arts press. The movies *Capote* (2005) and *Infamous* (2006) extended such attention outside the reading public. Despite Capote's low status in gay and lesbian studies, he never lost his place as an effeminate, outrageous, dissolute gay icon of a type that predated the Stonewall era. Since Capote was never forgotten, he can't easily provide the thrills of academic discovery and revival. And since Capote was and remains so publicly gay, he's no fun to "queer."

This scholarly neglect is unfortunate, as Capote's persona and writing have obvious relevance for both the political objectives of gay and lesbian studies and queer theory's interest in the creation of identity. Capote's words and actions are best seen not as arising from a coherent, established political ideology (much less a manipulative realpolitik) but rather as arising from the sort of personal stirrings from which such ideologies develop. In a letter to his partner Richard Hunter written on 8 June 1946, Leo Lerman offers an example of such stirrings a few months before Capote meets the Trillings on the train:

The other night when I was talking about homosexuality, I said—why I do not now know—how it was a sickness; how anything which deviates from the norm or the average must be or make for sickness, for the norm and the average do not condone deviations and put all who deviate outside. This outsideness—for all one's arrogance—does provide some little distortion or some anguish or some pain. This pain, this incompatibility, is part of sickness. . . . When I said this, [Capote] was furious. He said that I had a distorted view of life, that everyone condoned homosexuality, that everyone knew about it and didn't even think about it. So I saw that this creature had a very immature and idealistic approach to life. . . . When I tried to tell him that if he got into a sex scandal no one save avant-garde publications would publish him, he said that I really had the most morbid approach to life, that he couldn't believe that [Harper's] Bazaar would not publish him. Do you think that this is how the younger people really all think? (31 - 32)

Capote's understanding of homosexuality and its consequences differentiates him not only from the Trillings but also from Lerman, who, though

he explicitly repudiates the current understanding of homosexuality as mental illness, nonetheless uses terms like "sickness" and "deviation" to describe the internalized effects of discrimination and oppression. Was Capote as naive as Lerman claims, or so willful and aggressive that he enjoyed unusual freedom? Certainly the careers of academics such as Newton Arvin, Capote's lover at the time of Lerman's letter, were destroyed by scandal, and the fear of such scandal helped drive others such as F. O. Matthiessen to suicide. 13 Creative writers benefited from the looser constraints of bohemia, but both their careers and the freedom to write as they chose were frequently stunted by the threat and fact of such scandal for much of the twentieth century. Yet Capote's career never suffered in any obvious way and arguably profited from his openly homosexual public persona and the frequent appearance of homosexual characters and themes in his work.14 Furthermore, there is no record of any homophobic violence directed toward the adult Capote. At least in his own case, he wins his argument with Lerman. I want to consider whether he also wins his fight with the Trillings.

"We had a very pleasant time"

The written records of the Capote/Trilling fracas have contradictory dates. Diana Trilling writes that she met Capote in 1943 or 44 (Beginning 110), when he was 18 or 19. This is close to the publication of Lionel's E. M. Forster but before Capote's first major publication, the short story "Miriam" in the June 1945 Mademoiselle. Plimpton, however, puts Trilling's oral history in the 1947 section of his oral history. The most likely date is 1946, since Capote writes that he "rode up to Conn. with the Trillings last Saturday" in a 17 August 1946 letter to Mary Louise "Pidgy" Aswell, fiction editor at Harper's Bazaar (Too Brief 30). He also mentions the train ride in a letter to Lerman the day before (31), and both letters specify that this is his first meeting with the Trillings, which accords with Barry Werth's claim that Capote escorted Newton Arvin to a meal with the Trillings in 1947 (109). Diana also seems mistaken in the Plimpton oral history when she claims that she "knew [Capote's] name, of course, because I had written something about him by this time" (70); I have found no reference by her to Capote before her review of Other Voices in the 31 January 1948 Nation. These dates are important because the chronological placement of this meeting in terms of Capote's career makes the

Trillings either more or less important to him in general, and because Diana's review of *Other Voices*, whether coming or already written, would be influential. Either it would be affected by the Trillings' encounter with Capote, or it would affect Capote's reaction to the couple.

In whichever year the train meeting occurred, Capote's speech and behavior constructed identity; he not only visually and audibly exhibits homosexuality but also claims the necessary relevance of sexual orientation to the self and its products. For Capote, the elision of Forster's homosexuality was "impossible"—Forster's art could not be discussed outside the context of his sexuality. Capote interrogates Lionel Trilling on three valences of knowledge: Does he know? Had he heard? Did he guess? Certainly other critics had implied Forster's sexuality by 1946. In Diana's narrative in the Plimpton oral history, Capote tells the couple that Forster "had left a homosexual novel in the British Museum, and that at his death it would be found" (71). (The novel was *Maurice*, which would be published in 1971.) "Lionel said this would be interesting but he wasn't particularly concerned about it for his book, and that was it." The conversation was over—a silence that was representative of the humanist midcentury stance toward homosexuality and gender issues.

In Diana's The Beginning of the Journey the anecdote is much shorter, and the conflict boils down to this: "Why, [Capote] demanded, had Lionel, in writing about Forster, not dealt with Forster's homosexuality? Lionel explained that he had not known of Forster's homosexuality when he wrote the book; the possibility had occurred to him only when he was reaching the end" (110). Here she collapses Lionel's refusal to acknowledge Forster's orientation until browbeaten by Capote, and his insistence that he didn't treat Forster's sexuality in his study because he didn't think it was relevant, into his belated realization. By contrast, in the face of willful indifference from powerful authority figures, the Capote of the oral history insists that Forster's sexuality has not only marked his text but also is relevant to his literary production. Capote's comments are courageous both because of his position of power in relation to the Trillings in the academic and literary worlds and because of his refutation of contemporary standards of literary criticism. Moreover, he demands recognition and respect for a minority not then commonly conceptualized as such, much less as deserving of civil rights or even serious attention. Such aggressive intervention was risky, for at this historical moment his demand for the discussion of Forster's sexuality was tantamount to revealing his

own orientation to the Trillings and to any eavesdropper. Diana displaces this revelation onto the physical and physiological, onto the odd looks and "extraordinary squeaky voice" that, for her, reduces and dehumanizes Capote to a "little creature." She thus shows her understanding of his indirect (however recognizable) signification of his homosexuality. His behavior is remarkable because he asserts his gay identity not only tacitly but also through the direct, public mention of homosexuality and its importance to literary analysis.

Capote presumably knew the dangers of his assertion—dangers that Diana projects onto her fear of a mob lynching, a fear that masks the professional risk Capote took of a literary lynching by the Trillings. Yet Capote's aggressive assertion of homosexuality is still an identitarian performance rather than a direct statement of identity. Capote does not directly say that his own homosexuality causes him to find Lionel's silence "impossible." Perhaps he assumes that his look and manner offer sufficient public announcement that he's gay, as they did for Diana. If so, Lerman's letter to Richard Hunter offers evidence that Capote would assume that the passengers "condoned homosexuality, that everyone knew about it and didn't even think about it." Certainly Capote's letter to Pidgy Aswell lacks an overt politics:

I rode up to Conn. with the Trillings last Saturday (how this came about is very amusing; Leo [Lerman] had shown me some photographs of them, and while I was buying my train ticket who should be standing in line behind me but etc.... so I introduced myself, wasn't that bold? and we had a very pleasant time) and liked them ever so much. (*Too Brief* 30)

Capote is less sunny in the previous day's letter to Lerman:

I introduced myself, and I am glad I did, for [the Trillings] were very sweet, and we had a pleasant ride on the train together. I liked them enormously—but, because of various things, I'm afraid I was in rather a jittery state, and made a bad impression. (31)

Contrast this fear of a bad impression with Diana's fear of a lynching, or her more modest claim in *The Beginning of the Journey* that "the mere sound of Capote's voice roused the passengers in our railroad car and as he went on to speak of Forster's homosexuality, one could feel the air thickening with hostility" (110). As she tells and writes it, the Trillings'

encounter with Capote verges from the tense to the terrible—a concern that Capote would want to share with Lerman and Aswell, with whom he frequently shared career troubles and personal disasters and dislikes.

Did Capote's "pleasant time" with the Trillings indeed make the other passengers "uncomfortable, angry at him, very angry"? Perhaps when Diana writes that "Truman wasn't watching or if he was he didn't let on," she is accurate; perhaps he didn't find the conversation extraordinary. But for the Trillings, Capote's very existence as an assured gay man was violent, and his casual conversation was aggression of an extreme and unusual kind. He asserts a formulation of homosexuality that they could not incorporate into their liberal imaginations—precisely the failure of the liberal imagination that Lionel exposes in E. M. Forster.

The limits of the liberal imagination

Lionel Trilling's baldly stated indifference about Forster's homosexuality is of a piece with Wimsatt and Beardsley's manifestos against the intentional and affective fallacies, which delineated the New Critics' demand that criticism be restricted to the text. ¹⁵ Such demands were shaped by the value of impersonality in art articulated in T. S. Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent" and "Hamlet and His Problems," which hold that artistic success depends not on self-examination but on the ability to produce a concrete expression of emotion. As the text itself contains what is needed for its interpretation, Wimsat and Beardsley find an author's intent and a reader's subjective experience immaterial to literary criticism.

The Trillings were not New Critics but shared their tone of high seriousness and practice of rigorous close reading, and were very much part of the paradigm shift that led to Wimsatt and Beardsley's manifestos. In addition, the New York Intellectuals wanted to democratize literary criticism, and shunning the intentional and affective fallacies released the critic from the need to be justified by ethnic, national, or religious background. This move accorded with the New York Intellectuals' past as collegiate Trotskyites who believed in an international proletariat and the brotherhood of man. It also had the benefit of helping Lionel and others win tenure at schools with no history of granting it to Jews. While the political engagement that the New York Intellectuals inherited from the Old Left led them to historicize texts for political purposes, such historicization skirted personal biography in general and sexual orientation in

particular, and on the New Haven Railroad of 1946, Lionel's dismissal of Forster's homosexuality would seem to need no defense against a young, loud stranger. Yet his dismissal is difficult to defend in terms of his own attack on the limits of the liberal imagination.

Consider how he drops Capote's proffer of Maurice. By 1946, Forster had published five novels: Where Angels Fear to Tread, The Longest Journey, A Room with a View, Howard's End, and A Passage to India. One would think that another novel would have been at least of some interest to Lionel, whose E. M. Forster was composed of an introduction, a chapter on Forster's intellectual and artistic development, a chapter on the short stories, and a chapter on each novel. He might choose not to write about an unpublished novel (or discuss the matter with Capote), but it is unlikely that it didn't "concern [him] very much." Yet neither Diana nor Lionel acknowledges, much less comments on, Maurice, either in the longer anecdote or in its frame. Instead, Maurice closes the conversation—and disappears entirely from Diana's shorter version of the quarrel in The Beginning of the Journey.

Lionel's 1964 introduction to the second edition of E. M. Forster continues to avoid Maurice and Forster's sexuality. He writes that he has become friends with Forster but feels that "the reader, and Mr. Forster's art, and criticism itself, are best served by early and impersonal opinions" (iv). The book was reissued in 1971, two years after the Stonewall Riots, probably in the hope of catching some sales from the 1971 publication of Maurice. Thus 1971 was a big year for Forster in both mass and literary culture—but Lionel, though he was still writing, had no comment on either Forster's or his novel's homosexual focus. Lionel neither revised his 1964 introduction nor discusses Forster's homosexuality anywhere else. As Diana writes, "That was it." Maurice and gay Forster, like Capote's comments, cannot be incorporated into either Trilling's liberal imagination. 16

Lionel introduces The Liberal Imagination, his collected essays, by noting his "abiding interest in the ideas of what we loosely call liberalism, especially in the relation of those ideas to literature" (ix). He notes that "the conscious and the unconscious life of liberalism are not always in accord" (xiii) and emphasizes liberalism's "first essential imagination of variousness and possibility, which implies the awareness of complexity and difficulty" (xv). In E. M. Forster he offers a path to such imagination: a sense of "moral reality, which is not the awareness of morality itself but

of the contradictions, paradoxes and dangers of living the moral life" (6). Through Forster, he diagnoses the liberal unconscious:

All [Forster's] novels are politically and morally tendentious and always in the liberal direction. Yet he is deeply at odds with the liberal mind, and while liberal readers can go a long way with Forster, they can seldom go all the way. They can understand him when he attacks the manners and morals of the British middle class, when he speaks out for spontaneity of feeling, for the virtues of sexual fulfillment, for the values of intelligence. . . . But sooner or later they begin to make reservations . . . they feel that he is challenging *them* as well as what they dislike. And they are right. For all his long commitment to the doctrines of liberalism, Forster is at war with the liberal imagination.

Surely if liberalism has a single desperate weakness, it is an inadequacy of imagination: liberalism is always being surprised. (13)

The Trillings are certainly surprised by Capote, who hangs Lionel by his own critique. Diana tells us that Lionel's comprehension of Forster's homosexuality "began to dawn on," had "occurred to" him as he wrote his critical study. How? Why? If Lionel restricted himself to a close reading, then homosexual erotics must be embedded in the text itself for such a dawn to rise. Lionel admits that "Biography intrudes itself into literary judgment and keeps it from being 'pure' . . . although we call extraneous the facts that thrust themselves upon us, they inevitably enter into our judgment" (Forster 113). He mentions this in the context of gaps in Forster's novel writing; that these gaps were filled in part by writing Maurice and the homoerotic stories posthumously published in The Life to Come goes unmentioned.

Maurice aside, homosexuality is easily detected in Forster's work. Trilling, a keen reader of class, proves blind to it—or chooses to overlook it. Consider the most conventional of the novels, A Room with a View, where George and Lucy, a man and woman (unlike Maurice) of the same ethnicity (unlike Where Angels Fear to Tread and A Passage to India) and same class (unlike all the other novels) who stay within accepted gender roles and bounds (unlike all the others) overcome a variety of obstacles on their way to a happy and presumably fruitful heterosexual marriage (unlike all but Howard's End). On a country outing, Lucy finds herself in a field of flowers:

From her feet the ground sloped sharply into view, and violets ran in rivulets and streams and cataracts, irrigating the hillside with blue, eddying around the tree stems, collecting into pools in the hollows, covering the grass with spots of azure foam. . . . For a moment [George] contemplated her, as one who had fallen out of heaven. He saw radiant joy in her face, he saw the flowers beat against her dress in blue waves. The bushes above them closed. He stepped quickly forward and kissed her. (80)

Lucy's next kiss, with Cecil Vyse, does not parallel the first: "She gave such a business-like lift to her veil. As he approached her he found time to wish that he could recoil. As he touched her, his gold pince-nez became dislodged and was flattened between them" (124). Instead, the actual parallel to the pools of violets comes when three men—George, Lucy's brother, and the parson—bathe in a pool, the Sacred Grove, with naked abandon; as Eric Haralson writes, "Masculine bodies and desires notably romp" (62). 17 Plotwise, there is little reason for this romp's length and breadth. Though the scene does eventually offer a naked George up to Lucy, the main action is mano a mano with greens on the side:

it reminded one of swimming in a salad. Three gentlemen rotated in the pool breast high, after the fashion of the nymphs in Götterdammerung. . . . Then all the forces of youth burst out. [George] smiled, flung himself at them, splashed them, ducked them, kicked them, muddied them, and drove them out of the pool. . . . They ran to get dry, they bathed to get cool, they played at being Indians in the willow-herbs, they bathed to get clean . . . the two young men were delirious. Away they twinkled into the trees, Freddy with a clerical waistcoat under his arm, George with a wide-awake hat on his dripping hair. (150–51)

The scene is remarkable in the context of the otherwise proper action of the novel—and the parallel in terms of vegetation and water imagery is unmistakable. The pools of violets have become the Sacred Grove.

Leslie Fiedler's groundbreaking 1948 analysis of homoerotics in "Come Back to the Raft Ag'in, Huck Honey!"—in Partisan Review, no less—shows that homosexual readings were being made and published at the time. Yet Trilling demonstrates little attention to Forster's detailed sensuality. He does not note the water imagery of the first kiss and ignores the Sacred Grove except to say that "George has been swimming with

Freddy and Mr. Beebe in the pool, and the pool in the sun and wind 'had been a call to the blood and the relaxed will' and had dispelled his bleak neurotic despair" (Forster 106). From a critic attuned to the importance of sexuality in Forster's work—a critic who holds that in Room, "As always in Forster, sexuality and right political feeling have a point of contact" (106) and, summarizing the novel's main theme, quotes Forster that "Love is of the body—not the body, but of the body" (99)—such poor reading is remarkable.

Nonetheless, Trilling's study was invaluable to the investiture of Forster's reputation, brought his work to a larger public, among them lesbians and gays, and defended Forster against previous homophobic reviewers such as F. R. Leavis, who tagged the author as "bent" and "spinsterly" (qtd. in Martin and Piggford 15). In this, Trilling functions something like Lucy's Aunt Charlotte Bartlett. When Lucy at last achieves her happy ending, she realizes that her aunt, at first an obstacle to the marriage, engineered a later meeting that confirmed it. As Trilling writes: "For when the heroine at last fulfills her destiny, deserts Miss Bartlett and marries the man she has unconsciously loved, she comes to perceive that in some yet more hidden way Miss Bartlett had really desired the union" (10). Trilling, like Charlotte, performs the role of matchmaker at considerable cost. As he raised Forster's critical profile, he did substantive damage to Forster's capacity, at least as transmitted by literary critics, to communicate specifics of a homosexual politics and subjectivity. Martin and Piggford hold that Trilling's work, in its refusal to comment directly on homosexuality and its consistent abstraction of a broad liberal utopianism, is

responsible for a number of well-meaning generalizations that dangerously obscure the very precision of Forster's observations and the sophisticated political analysis that underlies them and that totally efface any nuanced treatment of sexuality. (10)

The path to Forster for an individual gay or lesbian reader was occluded.

Nonetheless, for gay men and women of sufficient mental deftness and revolutionary consciousness, Trilling's critique could easily be extended to liberatory ends. Capote and Trilling, and Lucy and Charlotte, are all liberal humanists, though Trilling and Charlotte are unwilling to directly argue on behalf of sexuality. It is not his critical strategy or his ethics but his homophobia—his own or his fear of his readers'—that

leaves him silent in his study and on the train. It's this complex silence where there could so easily be speech that fascinates Capote. It contrasts with the relative volubility of Elizabeth Hardwick, whose response to Capote is shaped by the construction of the feminine within the midcentury intelligentsia.

A dainty blow

Capote's first novel, Other Voices, Other Rooms, is best understood as a psychosexual allegory of gay adolescence. As the novel opens, 13-year old Joel Knox, whose mother has died, is summoned to the home of his estranged father, Ed Sansom. In time, Joel learns that his father is bedridden and can communicate only by throwing a rubber ball; Joel was actually summoned by his stepmother's cross-dressing cousin Randolph, who had shot Sansom at the climax of a complex love tangle that centered on a boxer whom Sansom managed. After the shooting, Randolph had the incapacitated Sansom marry Randolph's cousin, nurse manqué Amy Skully, and all three repaired to her Southern Gothic estate.

Joel's discovery of this family plot takes place against the backdrop of his friendships with the butch/femme twins Idabel and Florabel, and with Zooey, the family servant. Joel's flirtation with tomboy Idabel climaxes in a romantic triangle with the dwarf Miss Wisteria, who is erotically infatuated with Joel, as Idabel is with Miss Wisteria. These burgeoning sexualities overwhelm Joel, who has a nervous collapse. Joel is nursed back to health by Randolph, and the novel ends with what seems to be an erotic agreement between the two as Joel prepares to directly encounter Randolph in drag for the first time, an encounter that the novel explicitly states makes Joel a man.

The novel was a succès de scandale, in no small part due to Capote's author photo, which recollects Manet's Olympia, and most reviews referenced the photo as much as the text. While most reviews were positive, with significant reservations, Partisan Review, the mouthpiece of the New York Intellectuals, trashed Other Voices in a 15 March 1948 review by novelist and critic Elizabeth Hardwick, a frequent contributor to Partisan Review who helped found its intellectual heir, The New York Review of Books. To a large extent, Hardwick's clouded recognition of the novel's homosexuality is her critical apparatus, though she mentions it by name

only in her opening statement on Capote, when she claims that Other Voices

rings a tinkling funeral bell for some of our recent Southern fiction. Here at last is the parody whose appearance was inevitable; amidst sherry and gloom, withering homosexuals, and dainty sadistic young women, many of the devices that have served young Southern writers well have been literally done to death.

(376)

Where Trilling is silent, Hardwick is abusive. Her reduction of sexuality to a device, a fictional trope, is profoundly antihumanist and moves past the New Critics toward a radical formalism. Hardwick's other writing reveals her as a humanist in terms of heterosexuality—which leaves homophobia rather than metaphysics as the fundament of her argument. Note how she reduces homosexuality to an example of local color parallel to "dainty sadistic young women" and how these women are given terminal and therefore dominant status among the novel's characteristics though they do not actually appear in *Other Voices*. Miss Amy and Florabel might be called dainty but neither is sadistic, and one is middle-aged, the other preadolescent. If *dainty* is stretched to mean *small*, the dwarf Miss Wisteria qualifies, but she is not sadistic either. Instead, the dainty sadist is Hardwick, whose delicate style is executed with cruelty.

Hardwick's dainty yet canny blow forecloses charges of willful ignorance and censorship. She signals sophistication; she is not averse to discussing homosexuality in the novel but considers it only as important as sherry. Yet consider her phrase "rings a tinkling funeral bell," with its arch construction and indirect reference to fairies, in its self-consciousness closer to the writing of Ronald Firbank than Capote. If homosexuality is so unworthy of consideration, why does Hardwick use camp for homophobic ends? She indicates familiarity and ease with homosexual dialect to discredit it—a doubly-reversed discourse that perverts Firbank. Hardwick's slight mention of homosexuality and use of camp dialect is just that—a slight—as serious consideration would require a politics that allowed for the apprehension of homosexuality as a serious subject.

Such consideration did not come quickly for Hardwick. Fifteen years later, while reviewing Isherwood's A Single Man for The New York Review of Books, she notes that "Isherwood's books have all been homosexual in

spirit; even campy. Perhaps the surprising thing is that he has so often been able to be a serious artist at the same time." For Hardwick, homosexuality may be trivial, but it is also constitutive: "[The hero] has a fairly modest anal disposition, respectable enough, with a finicky, faggoty interest in the looks of things." Hardwick's exploration of homosexuality continues in her best-regarded novel, *Sleepless Nights*, which sports a gay character whose "anal disposition" is more pronounced: his "unyielding need to brush his perfect teeth after dinner . . . did much to inhibit his sex life" (30). The novel's lesbian fares worse:

grinding away in rage for her Ph.D., she became or decided she was a lesbian. In a frightened, angry plunge, she fell into a desperate affair with a handsome older woman from England. And what did she find there? Happiness, consolation? No, she found, with her ineluctable ill-luck, a nightmare of betrayals, lies, deceits, shocks, infidelities, dismissals. (19)

This is the sole example of female same-sex desire that I have found in Hardwick's corpus, about which Joan Didion has noted that "the mysterious and somnambulistic 'difference' of being a woman has been, over 35 years, Elizabeth Hardwick's great subject, the topic to which she has returned incessantly" (60). This mystery does not include sexual orientation, however, as female same-sex desire in Hardwick's world is a product of rage and productive of nightmares. Hardwick offers a case study of a writer who defines herself as a social liberal but whose past degradation of homosexuality is neither addressed nor rethought in print.

While I do not pretend to understand Hardwick's distaste for homosexuality in general or *Other Voices* in particular, I believe that it stems in part from the gendered mechanisms responsible for the publication and reproduction of Capote's fiction. For from the broad generic sward on which Capote pitches his specific fictional tent, to his places of publication, to the superstructure of the career that supports this publication, Capote almost invariably lands on the feminine side of a gendered binary. Until *In Cold Blood*, his career, as well as his persona and art, is almost entirely effeminate—and thus, in the cultural context of the late 1940s, supremely queer. When it comes to self-promotion, Capote is a career girl nonpareil.

Girls' school

In Love and Death in the American Novel, Leslie Fiedler defines two gendered schools of fiction:

one associated with Harper's Bazaar, the other with Partisan Review. I pick Harper's Bazaar to stand for a whole group which includes Mademoiselle and Vogue. . . . Harper's Bazaar is, of course, not primarily a literary magazine at all, but an elegant fashion magazine for women, read not only by those who can afford the goods it advertises but by many who cannot and who participate in its world of values, picking it up on the table of a beauty-parlor waiting room. Finding a story by, say, Truman Capote tucked away between the picture of a determinedly unbeautiful model and an ad for a brassiere, most of the readers of Harper's Bazaar, one assumes, must simply skip the meaningless pages; and knowing this, the editors know that they can print anything they please. (200)

Fiedler's binary is sharpened by his evocation of *Harper's Bazaar*—a distaff spin-off of the securely male *Harper's Monthly*—as the standard-bearer of feminine discourse. What do we find in the bazaar? Questionable goods.

Characteristically, Fiedler's protean sensibility and deadpan satire make him hard to parse. His view of the material considerations of publishing stories in midcentury women's magazines is accurate in denotation if not connotation: Capote's stories as first published were mingled with women's advertising. Nonetheless, Fiedler's use of Capote's work as emblematic of a degraded female fiction, in essence filler between ads, reveals Capote's status in literary culture and how this culture was gendered and valued by an influential critic who placed himself on the Partisan Review side of the line. Thus Capote confided his encounter with the Trillings to Leo Lerman and Pidgy Aswell, whose association with Harper's Bazaar placed them on the female side of Fiedler's bifurcated literary world.

Fiedler sees art as the province of *Partisan Review* writers and positions their writing as masculine. As Diana Trilling sniffs, "There was nothing light-mindedly fashionable about reading *The Nation*. It was an obligation of intelligence" (*Beginning* 331). Equating Capote with rich

women whose glamour seduces the poor to share in capitalist ideology through vicarious commodity fetishism, Fiedler devalues both, fulfilling the demand of masculine hegemony that other holders of power (here, women with money and men who do not toe the sexual line) be put down. Fiedler, a Jewish egghead with a groundbreaking study of homoerotics to his androgynous name, bolsters his masculine bona fides by asserting that rich women and homosexual men are not interested in art but decoration, thereby fortifying the palace of art against the feminine intruder—or more precisely, defining these feminine contributions as superficial, matters of interior decoration, not structural soundness. Any evidence of intellectual sophistication in *Harper's Bazaar*, whether it be a "determinedly unbeautiful model" or Capote's fiction, is either a complicated form of advertising or "meaningless." Those who are not (straight) men do not read or compose art, but instead participate in

a new sort of sensibility, defined by a taste for haute couture, classical ballet, baroque opera, the rites and vestments of Catholicism—and above all for a type of literature at once elegantly delicate and bitterly grotesque. This new kind of sensibility, although (or perhaps because) it is quite frankly a homosexual one, appeals profoundly to certain rich American women with cultural aspirations, and is therefore sponsored in their salons and published decoratively in magazines that cater to their tastes.

(Love and Death 201-02)

The direct mention of homosexuality crowns a litany of disgust and damns an entire aesthetic with the red robes of Baron Corvo. Against such fiction Fiedler positions *Partisan Review* writers such as Saul Bellow, who are "'political'...not only do they have Marx in their blood... but also Freud... as well as contemporary sociology, anthropology, and philosophy in general" (204). In other words, these are serious, important (straight) men who write about serious, important things: (straight) men's things.

Fiedler takes a middle position between Lionel Trilling and Hardwick, neither consigning homosexuality to silence nor dismissing it with clever abuse but rather offering a considered (if homophobic) opinion. Furthermore, he complicates his binary: *Partisan Review* has published "wickedly witty" (206) Mary McCarthy, and Tennessee Williams and Paul Bowles, who retain a "sensibility, shriller or icier, but not fundamentally different from that which informs the fiction of the ladies' magazines" (203). But

in general, Fiedler's lines of gender, sexuality, and value draw Hardwick and Diana Trilling into a cross-gendered position—and reveal the stakes in their response to homosexuality (as linked to effeminacy) in general and to Capote in particular. The pressure on these women to distance themselves from and degrade Capote must have been considerable. Consider Fiedler's perception of Capote as a girlish Satan, as "almost a caricature of the type: the 'queen' as American author, possessing a kind of beauty, both in person and as an artist, which belongs to childhood and early adolescence, and which withers before it can ripen" (202). Hardwick and her intellectual sisters exhibit the tendency of the subordinated to raise their own standing by attacking each other instead of making common cause to change the parameters of dominance.

Yet without Diana Trilling's close attention, the record would be bare. We see Capote vs. Lionel Trilling primarily through her eyes, and though we may seek to correct her astigmatism, it's her memory, relation, and understanding that keep us from near-complete conjecture. She speaks only in her narrative frame, not on the train itself, where she enacts the demure "little woman." It's likely that her own subject position and self-representation gave her common (if subterranean) cause with Capote at a time when homosexuality was very closely associated with femininity. This would explain her fascination with Capote's attempt to discuss the unmentionable—and with her husband's silence at Capote's charge that he has insufficiently attended to sexuality, then coeval with gender. By this line of argument, Capote says what Diana can neither say nor consciously desire saying.

A double response

Diana Trilling acknowledges ambivalence as she begins her 31 January 1948 review of Other Voices in The Nation:

It is seldom that I have so double a response to a book...not since the early work of Eudora Welty has there been an example of such striking literary virtuosity...On the other hand, I find myself deeply antipathetic to the whole artistic-moral purpose of Mr. Capote's novel. In Mr. Capote's case, as with so many of our gifted contemporary artists, I would freely trade eighty percent of his technical skill for twenty percent more value in the uses to which it is put.

We see here an aesthetic that requires art to have moral purpose and value, a view that is consistent and overt throughout Diana's reviewing career (1942-49). Her collected reviews emphasize that fiction both represents and acts upon culture—"literature is no mere decoration of life but an index of the health or sickness of society" (Reviewing 208)—and that this index, as it catalogues, must have social utility: "Probably there has never been a time when so many people wrote so 'well' as now but to such meager purpose" (224). Yet she rejects crude recipes for social change: she dislikes "the use of the novel as a crude vehicle for argument or as an educational display-piece" (199); decries "the chief trend in our progressive literary culture . . . this mechanical notion that the individual finds himself by losing himself in some larger social manifestation" (183); and observes that "a large part of the anemia of our current fiction must surely be due to the soft political idealism which is its major inspiration" (133). What does she prefer? "An analysis of political forces without political analyses" (104). This parallels Lionel's resistance to crude systemization.²¹

Diana's consistent demand-stronger than her husband's-that literature have and inspire humanist values and thus actively promote political good ties her to existential humanism and to some degree distinguishes her from other New York Intellectuals, "cultural radicals" who never found an ideology to replace the certainty of the Old Left's faith in Marxism, and who held what Irving Howe calls "a radicalism without immediate political ends but pointed towards criticism of a meretricious culture" (34). Diana shares their critical impulse, but instead of arguing her position, she simply pronounces it each week in her column "Fiction in Review." Lionel, by contrast, argues at length—but without Diana's certain tone, perhaps because his view of his work's importance and attendant responsibility is stronger. Diana's marks of subordination-her gender, her status as the wife of a more respected critic, and her job as a writer of book reviews whose length does not allow sustained analysisfunction as a defensive shield. Why attack Diana and her witty reviews when one may go after Lionel at length? Her subordinate position thus produces a kind of authority and influence that provokes little dissent.

Some of Diana's challenges as a woman writer are detailed in her autobiography, where she writes that she was offered a named column after writing a few unsigned reviews for *The Nation*:

Now that I was to sign what I wrote, the question arose of what name I should choose, my maiden name or my name as Lio-

nel's wife. Socially I was always known by my married name. We consulted our friends at *Partisan Review*. They were united in the advice that I write under my maiden name; they feared that I was going to be an embarrassment to Lionel. But Lionel was adamant that I write as his wife. (*Beginning* 328)

The Partisans corroborate Diana's own internalization of the lesser value of women's writing—a judgment that she often extends in her own reviews of women writers. Her self-subordination extends even to her autobiography's title—The Beginning of the Journey, which alludes to her husband's novel, The Middle of the Journey—and its subtitle, The Marriage of Lionel and Diana Trilling. In the memoir, she reflects:

The question most often asked of me by interviewers is: How did it feel to be Lionel's wife? How, they mean, did it feel to be a critic in my own right but married to a better and more famous critic than I? My honest if unfashionable answer is that it felt fine. . . . I never had any doubt in my mind but that, of the two of us, he was the more important writer. (350)

Her investment in this judgment suggests why she might be repulsed (and fascinated) by the homosexuality that was understood as a perversion of gender norms and development not only in the mass media of the 1940s but also in the midcentury psychoanalytic establishment, which corroborated this narrow view of gender and sexuality.²² Such revulsion was heightened by Capote's aggressive and successful presentation of an effeminate, hypersexualized public persona and by the extraordinary success of *Other Voices*, a novel that was written in a feminine idiom and overtly references homosexuality.

Nonetheless, Trilling is more tolerant than many of her peers. She doesn't exhibit a problem with gay or lesbian authors as such, and Isherwood's *Prater Violet* (1945) receives her best review of the decade: it is "the most completely realized new novel I have read in a long time but it is also a charming novel which yet reverberates with important meaning." Fulfilling her requirement that this meaning not be simplistic, the novel "is a book without a political moral yet a profound moral-political statement. It is gay, witty, and sophisticated *but* it is wholly responsible" (my italics). She affords her praise in part because "it is a book written in the author's own person but is without ego"; the queerness of the narrat-

ing "Christopher" is incidental to a novel that focuses on a leftist, Jewish German refugee who fulfills her definition of a proper hero much better than the narrator—or Joel Knox.

Trilling's review of Other Voices, reflecting her struggle with her homophobic subject position and with the public silence that swathed homosexuality in the late 40s, underscores the political importance of Capote's words on the train. Committed to humanist values and the rejection of any blanket ideology, she achieves greater depth in discussing homosexuality in Capote's work than any other contemporary critic—but her failure to recognize homosexual identity as a positive achievement compels this great humanist to the crudest type of demonization. For just as Capote is Satan to Leslie Fiedler, so Joel Knox, to Diana Trilling, is Hitler.

Trilling interprets the novel's thesis thus:

Despite its fantastic paraphernalia, Other Voices, Other Rooms does manage to convey a serious content. At the end of the book young Joel turns to the homosexual love offered him by Randolph and we realize that in his slow piling up of nightmare denial, Mr. Capote has been attempting to re-create the mental background to sexual inversion. What his book is saying is that a boy becomes a homosexual when the circumstances of his life deny him other more normal gratifications of his need for affection. (231)

There could be no clearer statement of the midcentury view of homosexuality as an unfortunate detour of psychological development. Instead of seeing Joel's nightmarish experiences as products of both external and internalized homophobia, she sees them as *productive* of homosexuality.

After reiterating her husband's strategic indifference—"Well, I am not equipped to argue whether or not this is a sound explanation of the source of homosexuality. Nor does the question interest me here" (231)—Trilling repeats the projection we saw on the train, when she displaces her own anger and fear onto the other passengers, imagining they might lynch Capote. Note her rhetoric and the extent of her displacement as she asserts that determining the cause of homosexuality is immaterial to a consideration of the illegitimacy of prejudice against homosexuals:

Much more arresting is the implication of Mr. Capote's book that, having been given an explanation of the *cause* of Joel's homosexuality, we have been given all the ground we need for a proper attitude *toward* it and toward Joel as a member of society. For what other meaning can we possibly draw from this portrait of a passive victim of his early circumstances than that we must always think of him in this light, that even when Joel will be thirty or forty we will still have to judge him only as the passive victim of his early circumstances? But in exactly the same sense in which Joel is formed by accidents of his youthful experience, we have all of us, heterosexuals no less than homosexuals, been formed by our early experience. Is no member of society, then, to be held accountable for himself, not even a Hitler?

(232; Trilling's italics)

How does Trilling get from the Joel at the book's close to Joel at thirty or forty? Via his author, famously in his early twenties. She abandons the New Critics' imperative, holds Capote biographically accountable for writing Other Voices, and gives notice that neither now nor in the future should he expect to be forgiven for being gay simply because he has illuminated his childhood. For the grown-up Joel, by virtue of his homosexuality, is coeval with Hitler.

Warning against "an adult world of passive acceptance in which we are rendered incapable of thinking anybody responsible for anything" (232), Trilling presumes that homosexuality is a choice, and a bad one. This structures her reading of *Other Voices* as an origin tale of homosexuality and her critique of its

blanket indorsement [sic] of the deterministic principle....With startling regularity our most talented young novelists present us with child heroes who are never permitted to grow up into an adulthood which will submit them to the test of *conduct*.

(232; Trilling's italics)

The test of conduct: Capote should put his characters into a position where they may actively choose heterosexuality and be praised or condemned for their success or failure.

Still, Trilling is alone among contemporary reviewers in, however distantly, approaching the abuse that undergirds Other Voices. It is possible

that in her condemnation of thirty- or forty-year-old Joel/Capote, she actually addresses Cousin Randolph, who forces Joel—himself in search of a father—to act as Randolph's "old man." Rather than continue along these or any other lines, she retreats by granting that "the problem" is "complex" and that she "does not mean to close out all social or personal causality"; she asks only "for some degree of mediation between the extremes of causality and freedom" (232). But what is her suggestion for Joel? How should he resist the "slow piling-up of nightmare detail" and happily embrace genital heterosexuality? Trilling's critical conscientiousness, coupled with the impossibility of a happy heterosexual embrace by Capote's protogay and lesbian characters, frustrates her into invoking Hitler.

If, as Lionel Trilling writes, "the conscious and unconscious life of liberalism are not always in accord," then Diana Trilling at least recognizes her "mixed feelings" in the train car and a "double . . . response" in her review instead of merely acting out like Hardwick. Yet though she tries to understand her reaction, she does so by looking at who provoked it rather than at herself or her society. I read her reaction as follows: This book fascinates yet disgusts me. But instead of then asking Why am I disgusted? she asks What did the book, and its author, do to disgust me? Her failure to ask the first question limits her criticism and structures her memory of the New Haven Railroad.

Diana closes her review by solving the dilemma of how to both retain her humanist values and condemn homosexuality:

were we to ask of fiction, as we once did, that it base its claim to accomplishment on its moral stature, most of the writing we celebrate today would fall into its proper place as no more than a feat of literary athletics. (233)

The provocations of Other Voices have been "properly placed" as grand-standing, and thus dismissed. Diana's anecdote and review, and her husband's refusal to consider Forster's homosexuality, exemplify how homosexuality was discounted in progressive movements at midcentury—and Capote's actions on the train suggest how asserting gay and lesbian identity might offer redress.

Capote's relations with literary culture forecast a change in the relation among literary culture, homophobia, and homosexuality that eventually contributed to the ascendance of the identitarian critical politics

that have dominated literary criticism for the past quarter-century. In this respect, Capote wins his argument with the Trillings on the train. Reading the various reports of this meeting illuminates the postures, attitudes, and psychologies with which the three characters wage war over the terrain of literature and literary value in the borderlands where sexuality, humanism, and self-representation abut. The battle threatens the Trillings' (and their followers') belief that they perform liberal humanism, and therefore accrue moral worth. The battle also helps us see how major players in the New York intelligentsia that arbitrated literary merit (who makes it and who doesn't) and "appropriate" criticism are unsettled in their status quo when a volatile iconoclast like Capote refuses certain silences and strategically performs his queer persona. Such showmanship served not only as a support for Capote's career but also as one of the many acts of self-affirmation and articulation that, as the twentieth century progressed, would eventually produce a greater freedom of expression and interpretation for homosexuals in literary as well as popular culture.

Notes

- 1. Well after its heyday, Irving Howe named the group in his essay and elegy "The New York Intellectuals." Though the New York Intellectuals retained the fervent rhetoric and style of their origins in the crucible of the Old Left, the cohort would cease to be ideologically coherent as its members reacted variously to the Cold War, and the anticommunist temper of the 50s and the social movements of the 60s. A very few, such as Howe, maintained their socialism throughout their life. Many, such as Leslie Fiedler and the Trillings, remained on the left, though wary of the New Left and the radicalisms of the 1960s. Some, such as Irving Kristol and Norman Podhoretz, moved far to the right, provided the intellectual underpinnings of neoconservatism, and became important figures for the Reagan and George W. Bush administrations. Others more or less associated with the group include Hannah Arendt, Daniel Bell, Midge Decter, Nathan Glazer, Michael Gold, Clement Greenberg, Elizabeth Hardwick, Alfred Kazin, Norman Mailer, Bernard Malamud, Mary McCarthy, Philip Rahv, Meyer Schapiro, Delmore Schwartz, Susan Sontag, and Edmund Wilson.
- 2. Lerman and Capote became close at Yaddo in the spring of 1946. Lerman, then an arts writer for *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*, would come to hold several editorial posts at Condé Nast, including features editor at *Vogue* and editor-inchief of *Vanity Fair*.

3. The ambivalence and complexity of Trilling's thoughts on ethnic identification are evident in his criticism, fiction, and career as editor of *The Menorah Journal* (1925–31). Typically, he begins "Under Forty" with "It is never possible for a Jew of my generation to 'escape' his Jewish origin" (198), adds "My existence as a Jew is one of the shaping conditions of my temperament" (199), and ends

As the Jewish community now exists, it can give no sustenance to the American artist or intellectual who is born a Jew. And . . . it has not done so in the past. I know of writers who have used their Jewish experience as the subject of excellent work; I know of no writer in English who has added a micromillimetre to his stature by 'realizing his Jewishness,' although I know of some who have curtailed their promise by trying to heighten their Jewish consciousness. (201)

Diana Trilling discusses her husband's Judaism in relation to his career in "Lionel Trilling: A Jew at Columbia."

- 4. Peter Christensen offers a useful overview of how Capote's homosexuality and the homosexual content and themes of his writing were perceived in academic criticism up until the 1990s. While he does not directly address Capote's politics or political impact, he does touch on the impact of gay liberation on Capote criticism.
- 5. Capote published *Music for Chameleons*, a collection of short pieces, shortly before his death in 1980. He has also had two posthumous publications: the incomplete opus *Answered Prayers* and the abandoned early work *Summer Crossing*, which he wrote in 1943, four years before he published *Other Voices*, *Other Rooms*.
- 6. The active homosexual subcultures and political movements of the 1920s and 30s were largely silenced by World War II. The traditional markers for the next phases of the gay and lesbian timeline—the homophile and gay rights movements—are the first meetings of the Mattachine Society in 1950 and the Daughters of Bilitis in 1955, and then the Stonewall Riots of 1969. These markers are more convenient and traditional than strictly accurate; that said, Capote had no overt connection with any of the nascent homophile groups active in 1946, though he was very much a part of a homosexual community. See Chauncey, Escoffier, and D'Emilio for a history of male gay community and identity.
- 7. For instance, the 1971 London Gay Liberation Front Manifesto states:

The present controllers [of the media are] dedicated defenders of things as they stand. Accordingly, the images of people which they transmit

in their pictures and words do not subvert, but support society's image of "normal" man and woman. It follows that we are characterized as scandalous, obscene perverts; as rampant, wild sex-monsters; as pathetic, doomed and compulsive degenerates; while the truth is blanketed under a conspiracy of silence. (318)

Much of this applies, say, to Capote's live televised interviews on *The Stanley Siegel Show*, which found him an intoxicated, suicidal fount of sexual innuendo about a presidential widow and her sister. Yet Capote also fits much of Henry Abelove's formulation of the unappreciated forebears of the Gay Liberation Front:

I want to draw attention to a set of anglophone writers . . . who published queer-themed work during the two decades preceding 1969. This work, it seems to me, was enormously productive for GLF, its members, and its milieu, and significantly contributed to the development of its outlook and values. (71)

Abelove does not include Capote in this cohort, perhaps because it is difficult to group him with writers such as Elizabeth Bishop and Paul Bowles as sources for "the GLF way of talking about the erotic in an anticolonialist frame of reference."

- 8. The mass public, of course, was even less interested in gay and lesbian children than were gays and lesbian themselves. Christensen notes that "objections to [Other Voices] on the basis of its intense inferiority may mask antigay prejudices in the sense that the experiences of gay youth are often not of interest to society as a whole" (63).
- 9. Summers's positioning of *The City and the Pillar* as a story of an "ordinary, wholesome young man" (130) forces him to discount the end of the novel, where the spurned hero murders his high-school crush. (In Vidal's 1965 revision, the murder becomes a rape.) Whether Vidal's gay hero is ordinary and wholesome is questionable, the fact that Vidal successfully decouples effeminacy and homosexuality is not. In "Young, Effeminate, and Strange," I argue that this decoupling accounts for why *The City and the Pillar* was received much less favorably than *Other Voices*, *Other Rooms* on publication, when Capote and his hero's youth and effeminacy made his novel comparably less threatening. Conversely, this decoupling accounts for the higher status of *The City* among gay liberationists invested in the "manly" homosexual.
- 10. Both McCullers and Capote wrote gothic fictions concerned with queer desires and set in a Southern locale. The comparison of McCullers and Capote, which dates from his earliest reviews, stems not only from thematic similari-

ties in their work but also from their common Southern background and her role in introducing him to literary society. The comparison is almost always to Capote's detriment. Typically, Leslie Fiedler notes in 1948 that "The most important writer of this group is Carson McCullers, the most typical Truman Capote" (Innocence 202); this "group" includes homosexual writers, Southern writers, and writers who publish in Harper's Bazaar and other women's magazines. Regardless of the merits of their writing, McCullers, as a woman, was more likely to be welcomed as the writer of such fiction than Capote, who, though an effeminate man, was still a man, and therefore expected to write about manly things.

- 11. "Desire and the Black Masseur" was included in Williams's One Arm and Other Stories, which was published in an edition of 1500 by a small press (New Directions), was not widely reviewed, and was not generally available in plain sight in bookstores but had to be requested from behind the counter. One Arm therefore had a much lower profile than its contemporaries, Other Voices and The City and the Pillar, which were best sellers.
- 12. The simultaneous development of the films Capote (2005, based on the Clarke biography) and Infamous (2006, based on the Plimpton oral history) illustrates that Capote was a topic of interest for the upper portion of the mass market—or more precisely, for the writers, directors, producers, and investors who determine what subjects are likely to appeal to moviegoers who attend upmarket, "arty" films with middling budgets and an acclaimed cast. As usual, such twinning was detrimental to the second film out. Capote had worldwide sales of almost \$50 million and garnered an Academy award for best actor (Philip Seymour Hoffman) as well as nominations for best picture, best director, best supporting actress, and best adapted screenplay. Infamous had sales just over \$1 million and an Independent Spirit award nomination for Daniel Craig for best supporting actor. The combined impact of both movies returned the Clarke biography (reissued in 2005) and In Cold Blood to the best-seller lists.
- 13. In 1950, under the combined stress of unrelieved mourning for the death of his partner, Russell Cheney; the beginnings of an investigation by the House Un-American Activities Committee that might make his homosexuality as public as his socialist beliefs; the increasing homophobia and anticommunism in the culture at large; and a pre-existing tendency to despair, Matthiessen jumped from a window to his death. See Abelove, Fuller, and Levin. For the 1960 police raid that found Arvin in possession of homosexual erotica and effectively ended his career, see DeMott, Martin, and Werth.
- 14. In "Young, Effeminate, and Strange" I examine Capote's early career and argue that his homosexual persona was a complex, effective, and consciously deployed marketing device rather than a hindrance to his career.

- 15. The two fallacies were first developed in separate articles in the Sewanee Review and are more clearly articulated in, and often dated from, the revisions included in The Verbal Icon.
- 16. See Lionel's review of the Kinsey Report for another example of his distaste for blunt discussions of sexuality and for his criticism of Kinsey's finding that, in Trilling's words, "homosexuality is to be accepted as a form of sexuality like another and that it is as 'natural' as heterosexuality" (474). His views on homosexuality would evolve in the 1960s.
- 17. Haralson's close reading of the bathing scene bears out Capote's argument that Forster's sexuality is important to his work. By contrast, Jeffrey Heath avoids Forster's sexuality despite its relevance to a reading concerned with the contrast between spontaneous and muddled responses to life, the latter being "what results when people ignore their deepest promptings and respond dishonestly and indirectly to experience as they are expected or told to do" (396). For Lucy this is not a "second-hand story or painting but . . . a living man, George Emerson, who kisses her: a real experience she can deny but never forget" (400).
- 18. Fiedler argues that throughout the history of American literature, pairs of men, frequently of different races, flee from the domesticity and civilized constraints of the world of women. Fiedler reads the unspoken but strongly implied homoerotics as a boyish wish of (male) American writers and readers—a symptom of delayed adolescence along Freudian lines. Another prominent midcentury literary critic who reads homosexuality as a symptom rather than a subject in and of itself is John Aldridge, who argues in 1951 that the presence of homosexuality (and racial conflict) in post-World War II fiction is a response to the exhaustion of the modernist tradition and the need for new means to engage readers. According to Aldridge, writers such as Capote, Vidal, Paul Bowles, and Norman Mailer are not writing about homosexuality per se but rather developing "new subject matter which [had] not been fully exploited in the past and which, therefore, still [had] emotive power" (9). Fiedler's and Aldridge's arguments bear witness that discussions of homosexuality weren't beyond the capacity of midcentury critics, though their tendency was to see it as a symptom rather than a subject.
- 19. That said, among those who did take homosexuality seriously in the 1940s were the neopsychoanalytic schools and hospitals attempting to cure it. To put Hardwick in perspective, she neither authorized a medical experiment on a homosexual nor tried to link *Other Voices* "perversion" back to its author.
- 20. In the 1998 documentary film Arguing the World, Diana Trilling recollects the outsider status of women among the New York Intellectuals: "Unless a

man in the intellectual community was bent on sexual conquest, he was never intimate with a woman. He wanted to be with the men. They always wanted to huddle in a corner to talk." Irving Kristol corroborates her account with an anecdote of sitting down with a plate of party food and being sandwiched by Hannah Arendt, Diana Trilling, and Mary McCarthy, who began an intense discussion about psychoanalysis: "I sat there quiet and terror-stricken. I was a prisoner."

21. See Trilling's introduction to The Liberal Imagination:

It is one of the tendencies of liberalism to simplify, and this tendency is natural in view of the effort which liberalism makes to organize the elements of life in a rational way. And when we approach liberalism in a critical spirit, we shall fail in critical completeness if we do not take into account the value and necessity of its organizational impulse. But at the same time we must understand that organization means delegation, and agencies, and bureaus, and technicians, and that the ideas that can survive delegation, that can be passed on to agencies and bureaus and technicians, incline to be ideas of a certain kind and of a certain simplicity: they give up something of their largeness and modulation and complexity to survive. . . . The job of criticism would seem to be, then, to recall liberalism to its first essential imagination of variousness and possibility, which implies the awareness of complexity and difficulty. (xiv—xv)

22. In her autobiography, Diana heavily details her patronage of psychoanalysis, both as a literary and cultural critic and as an analysand.

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Capote and the Trillings: Homophobia and Literary Culture at Midcentury



Elegy under the Knife:

Geoffrey Hill and the Ethics of Sacrifice

David Sherman

We read in sacred scripture: "And God tempted [fristede] Abraham and said: Abraham, Abraham, where are you? But Abraham answered: Here am I." You to whom these words are addressed, was this the case with you?

-Kierkegaard (21)

The great "experiences" of our life have properly speaking never been lived. Are not religions said to come to us from a past which was never a pure now? Their grandeur is due to this exorbitance exceeding the capacity of phenomena, of the present and of memory. To the voice that calls from the burning bush, Moses answers, "Here I am," but does not dare to lift up his eyes.

—Levinas ("Phenomenon and Enigma" 68)

The "Here I am" of the Hebrew Bible sounds different after Descartes's cogito; after Kierkegaard and Levinas, the cogito sounds different with their re-sounding of the "Here I am." The apodictic elegance of Descartes's certification of the subject contrasts with the Bible's tentative performative: the "Here I am" names a self at risk of failing in its response to a call, and a self falling into danger if it succeeds. While the cogito names a self transparently present to itself—a "coincidence of thought and being in the act of self-consciousness" (Žižek 15)—the "Here I am" is a subject without sovereignty over thought or being, a subject in the vicinity of an infinite alterity and exteriority. The "Here I am" is an iden-

tity that is not simply itself because it finds itself among unreadable signs and confronted with a demand or challenge still to come. It is a creature uttering its fragility, and for modern thought about subjectivity this utterance is a revelation of an excess in the self, a dramatic noncoincidence between being and the experience of selfhood, an ontological charge that exceeds the circuitry of identity. The "Here I am"—an admission of guilt as much as presence, of obedience more than self-assertion—can never be the divine "I am that I am." Kierkegaard himself is not simply Kierkegaard; in *Fear and Trembling* it is Johannes de Silentio who speaks, a pseudonym or alter ego displacing a proper name. It is in this moment of displacement that we find a capacity of the self to answer to alterity, precisely in its incapacity to sustain the cogito's seamless equation between being and consciousness.

Levinas finds a decertification of the cogito even in Descartes's thought: "In meditating upon the idea of God, Descartes sketched, with an unequaled rigor, [...] a thinking going to the point of the breaking up the I think" (God, Death, and Time 215). The Cartesian self, after Levinas, ruptures under the thought of God that "overflows every capacity; the 'objective reality' of the cogitatum breaks up the 'formal reality' of the cogitatio" ("God and Philosophy" 173). What remains of selfhood, for Levinas, is an "assignation in which the nucleus of the subject is uprooted, undone, [...] an I torn from the concept of the ego [...]. This is the I that is not designated, but which says 'here I am'" (181-82). One way to understand this "assignation" that is not "designated," or this "I" without "ego," is as subjectivity attuned to an absolute that exceeds itself, an absolute that cannot be correlated with its own being or knowledge, and that brings that being and knowledge to crisis. Kierkegaard and Levinas imagine this absolute relation in different ways-Kierkegaard's "Here I am" is a response directed first to God, Levinas's first to the human other-but even in their different maps of transcendence they share an essential concern: that we notice the modern subject trembling at its implication in an alterity it can neither avoid nor understand. The trembling represents Kierkegaard's theological critique and Levinas's ethical critique of thought that coerces the subject into abstraction and subsumes irreducibly particular identities into universal totalities. Kierkegaard and Levinas, in their distinct (and at moments antagonistic) critiques of philosophical abstraction and totaliza-

tion, want us to understand that the human is realized as a nearly unthinkable singularity, its uniqueness derived from its untransferable obligations and unrepresentable commitments to an alterity that cannot be reduced to the terms of the self.¹

It is a sense of this ethico-theological trembling of the modern subject that I want to pursue in Geoffrey Hill's elegies. Focusing on volumes published in 1996 (Canaan) and before, and especially on the remarkable elegy "September Song," I examine Hill's poetics of elegiac witness as an attempt to give form to the subject's radical singularity in an age of its abstraction. This argument—that Hill's elegies have at stake the self's singularity as it is reckoned, in different ways, by Kierkegaard and Levinas—implies that the modern subject achieves its nonsubsumable singularity in its capacity to pay witness to suffering and memorialize the dead. Mourning as Hill represents it, then, is not a recuperation of self but the sacrifice of its sovereignty in an absolute responsibility for the other—an absolute responsibility in which, as Levinas describes it, the self is hostage to the other. That elegy has something to do with Levinasian ethics is not so hard to imagine, but Hill is crucial because he complicates this ethical valence of elegy with a less gentle Kierkegaardian impulse. In Fear and Trembling Kierkegaard also conceives of the subject's singularity in the presence of the other's mortality, but in a very different scenario: through the story of Isaac's binding on Mount Moriah, where God commands Abraham to sacrifice his son in the service of a faith that exceeds comprehension and representation. In Hill's elegies, the fragility of the "Here I am" derives from a subtle oscillation between the extremity of Levinasian ethics and absurdity of Kierkegaardian faith, exposing a tension between the sacrifice of the self for the other and the sacrifice of the other for God. By considering Hill's elegiac power as a function, in part, of the way it stages an encounter between two of our most radical thinkers of modern subjectivity—two thinkers who inflect philosophy with theology and bring the self to its singular reckoning in religious structures of thought—we can better appreciate the complex way that Hill's poetry hovers between philosophy and theology, suggesting the possibility of a discourse about modern subjectivity that participates in both.

Elegy and the language of imaginative attestation

Alas!
The gold is dulled,
Debased the finest gold!
The sacred gems are spilled
At every street corner.
The precious children of Zion;
Once valued as gold—
Alas, they are accounted as earthen pots,
Work of a potter's hands!

—Lamentations 4

A pronounced drift in recent studies of elegies written in English has been from psychology to ethical philosophy, from attention to the psychoanalytic drama of elegy as a process of the subject's self-reconstruction after loss to a description of subjectivity taking on responsibility for the suffering or injustice experienced by the dead other. The psychoanalytic approach to elegy is probably most theoretically refined and historically thorough in Peter Sacks's *The English Elegy*, which argues that the work of mourning, as it is instantiated in elegy, requires "a detachment of affection from a prior object followed by a reattachment of the affection elsewhere" (8) because "the dead [...] must be separated from the poet, partly by a veil of words" (9). He compares elegy to a *fort-da* game in which the subject compensates for its lost object by poetically staging its disappearance and return in ways it can control (11). Sacks's approach is useful because it reveals the intimate, intricate involvement of elegiac lament in the subject's psychic reconstruction after loss.

However, in subsequent studies that take more contemporary elegies as a principal focus, this model has been considered inadequate, too neat an economy of self, as if elegy in the twentieth century had too much to answer for in its relation to the dead for mourning to be a recuperation of selfhood. Jahan Ramazani's *Poetry of Mourning* explicitly makes this historical and theoretical shift from Sacks's "view that compensatory mourning is the psychic basis of elegy" (xi) to an argument that the "economic misgivings of modern elegy" (7) "betray in their difficult, melancholic mourning the impossibility of preserving a pristine space apart, of grieving for the dead amid the speed and pressure of modern

life" (14). Ramazani describes a mournful excess by which the modern elegy slips into a recalcitrant melancholia that "resist[s] consolation, [...] sustain[s] anger, [...] reopen[s] the wounds of loss" (ix) as a refusal of "the obliteration of the dead by the socioeconomic laws of exchange, equivalence, and progress" (14). He analogizes the psychoanalytic model of mourning, associated with traditional elegy, to market economics—to principles of rationalized value and efficiency by which the dead become a calculable and replaceable loss. But modern elegists, he argues, resist this model, try to make something unquantifiable and irresolvable of the dead, even if this resistance is ineffective. In fact, modern elegists-Ramazani specifically includes Hill-make their painful awareness of the futility of this resistance a part of their complicated aesthetic; in an influential formulation, Ramazani writes that recently, "every elegy is an elegy for elegy—a poem that mourns the diminished efficacy and legitimacy of poetic mourning" (8). Between Sacks and Ramazani, traditional elegy and its modern melancholia and self-doubt, we find a critical and literaryhistorical shift in the relation between the living and the dead. We might think of this as a shift in value between identity and alterity: the excessive, unsuccessful grieving of modern elegy as a sign of commitment, at the expense of the self's autonomy, to the other in the other's greatest distance and vulnerability.

R. Clifton Spargo calls this radical elegiac commitment an ethics. In The Ethics of Mourning he describes melancholia as "an ethical concern for the other" that "interrogates the symbolic social structures that contain and reduce the meaning of the other who is being lamented" (11). Opposing "psychological resolution and the status quo of memory," Spargo writes, modern elegists make "unresolved mourning [. . .] a dissenting act, a sign of an irremissible ethical meaning" (6). This claim resembles Hill's own critical description of "the language of imaginative attestation" ("Rhetorics" 268) crafted by "the resistant conscience of our imagination" (269) that seeks to redeem the intrinsic value of language from its degradations. While Hill frames his "resistant conscience" in terms of aesthetic value, Spargo relies on ethical terms that are explicitly Levinasian. Levinas's ethical philosophy (which Spargo, in a rare and productive philosophical crossing of the English channel, brings into close conversation with Bernard Williams's philosophy) raises the stakes of elegiac lament and melancholia. The ethical relation to the other—to the dead other, in elegy—becomes the very foundation of subjectivity, the encounter

by which the self is possible: for Levinas, through his massive body of philosophical and theological writing, the self achieves its precise singularity only in its untransferable responsibility for the other. Spargo invokes Levinas's idea that identity is always already implicated with alterity, that the subject emerges as a discrete event only as a response ("Here I am") to the other's call:

Thus through Levinas and Williams we arrive at a paradox, which I state here as a principle: Emerging as a disruption of consciousness, responsibility means to be obligated beyond even the thoughts and actions of which we are capable; and yet despite the fact that it is always in excess of our capability, without the event of responsibility we would be less than ourselves, less than fully human. (17)

Modern elegiac literature, Spargo claims, has been especially attentive to this paradox of selfhood as a mode of excessive obligation. He suggests both that modern subjectivity becomes ethical in its capacity to mourn, and that it is this ethical capacity that delineates the contours of a particular subject in the first place—that appoints it as a presence: "What mourning imparts to ethics is a view in which the subject is signified precisely as one who is answerable to the unjustness of the other's death, as the very being chosen by the other for responsibility" (28). Modern elegies rehearse this experience of being chosen, of coming to self through the (always belated, always insufficient) response to the suffering and death of the other.

Elegy and value

Of the many ways that Geoffrey Hill's poetry has challenged readers over the past five or so decades, perhaps the most consequential for those concerned with modern literature's capacity to work through philosophical problems has been this poetry's binding ethical force, its obedience to a poetics that brings the self into responsibility for others. At its most arduous, Hill's poetics especially implies an ethics of historical obligation, an imperative to investigate the linguistic, intellectual, and political responsibilities that we have inherited from a past increasingly vulnerable to amnesia and obsolescence. For Hill, this relation to the past is not in

any interesting sense a question of influence anxiety, as if the dead were primarily creditors of an aesthetic debt in an economy of originality, but questions of memorial obligation, tribute, and witness. He achieves a pitch of historical answerability and response that implicates subjectivity in the unfinished business of the past. In part 8 of "Funeral Music" he renders this memorial labor as an obligation we assume passively, as a necessity that may nevertheless be futile:

So it is required; so we bear witness,
Despite ourselves, to what is beyond us,
Each distant sphere of harmony forever
Poised, unanswerable. If it is without
Consequence when we vaunt and suffer, or
If it is not, all echoes are the same
In such eternity. (New and Collected Poems 65)

The cautious thought that one's suffering might have historical significance, or at least intelligibility, is delayed, syntactically refracted, and contorted into double negation: "If it is without / Consequence when we vaunt and suffer, or / If it is not." Hill makes our redemptive contact with the past an essential possibility but also a tenuous one, at the limit of linguistic coherence, amplifying the precarious irony of eternity's indifference to our attempt to transcend temporal disasters. Hill's complicated aesthetic transactions with and on behalf of the dead inhere in poetic techniques that make historical responsibility inextricable from the aesthetic qualities of its articulation: in his work, the fraught burdens of this responsibility manifest as poetic form.

Hill's aesthetics of historical obligation take on various registers. Paul Robichaud, in his study of Hill's representation of Gothic architecture, has shown how Hill acknowledges "that artistic values are implicated in societal patterns of violence and exploitation" (196) and that Hill's "concern with the social ethics of English architecture mirrors his concern with the personal ethics of poetic workmanship" (183). This insight into the capacity of poetic craft to make urgent the injustice of past social relations resonates with Stephen James's potent meditation on the "figure of the politically and ethically responsible writer" (34) grappling with "the social responsibility inherent in linguistic usage" (45). Focusing on Hill's "The Mystery of the Charity of Charles Péguy," James asks

to what extent all writers should (or are able to) "stand by what they write." What is it, after all, that *entitles* someone to write on behalf of others who have suffered—or even enlist them as "comrades"? What kind of redress might one be hoping to achieve through such a potentially presumptuous act? (42)

These questions about the risks involved in using poetry as a mode of historical witness—questions that James shows to be posed by Hill's own poetry—raise the stakes of poetic craft: bad art becomes another injustice inflicted on the unjustly dead, an exploitation and continuation of their suffering. This is Peter McDonald's crucial implication in *Serious Poetry* when he focuses on "the manner of Hill's writing" which "insists upon certain obligations—intellectual, social, ethical—that bind us to each other and to the dead" (187) in a way that is "at odds with a number of prevailing modes, and moods, of thought" (188). Hill's insistence upon our ethical obligations, inherent in his poetic form, cuts against a pervasive, complacent ahistoricism; just as important, it refuses an equally tempting complacency in an unrigorous ethical intention that postures as historical witness without registering the ambivalence and risks involved in such writing about the dead.

We might consider Hill's poetry an attempt to create a relation to the past and the dead in which the self-interest of the living is not the organizing principle, or, as Hill puts it in his Tanner lectures "Rhetorics of Value," in which language involves "more than an easy familiarity with the surface conventions that, by and large, do not interfere with one's selfpossession or the possessiveness of one's own interested passions" (276). Language that unsettles self-possession and self-interest makes possible an ethical approach to the dead, a reckoning with the dead as a value that retains its alterity from us, a value that cannot be exchanged for the other values we traffic in. Hill, through his lectures, traces an intricate intellectual history of concepts of nonmarket value—"intrinsic value"—through, primarily, British literature, criticism, and philosophy. This exploration, which focuses on the "questionable relationship of value-theory to the spoken and written word, especially as this is formalized in the art of poetry" (259), notes an elegiac strain of thought about intrinsic value. In Hobbes, for example:

Leviathan, whatever else it is or is not, is a tragic elegy on the extinction of intrinsic value. [...] Hobbes's despair, in Leviathan,

arises from the extinction of personal identity, which he in turn identifies with intrinsic value in the person of the young Royalist Sidney Godolphin, killed in the Civil War.

This association between intrinsic value and elegy also emerges in Wordsworth and Ruskin:

What Wordsworth and Ruskin have in common [...] is the eloquence of mourning. They are essentially elegists when they write of the intrinsicality of the despised and rejected among the common people and the common things of the earth, as Hobbes was an elegist when he wrote of "inhaerant" virtues of the dead Royalist soldier-poet Sidney Godolphin. (279)

While Hill recognizes the limitations of an elegiac approach to assessing intrinsic value and contrasts this strain of thought to less mournful alternatives, he opens the possibility for an idea about the unique power of elegiac valuation of the other. In elegy, he suggests, the self enters into an ethical relation with the dead to the extent that the self is unsettled and dispossessed by its elegiac speech act, dispossessed by its adherence to a value that exceeds the terms of its identity.

The knight of faith, his witness

First and foremost, [Abraham] does not say anything, and in that form he says what he has to say. His response to Isaac is in the form of irony, for it is always irony when I say something and still do not say anything.

-Kierkegaard (118)

In his short poem of praise and mourning, elogé and elegy, for Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the Lutheran theologian who was executed by the Nazi regime after participating in a plot to kill Hitler, Hill considers how intrinsic value, in its alterity, can manifest as sacrifice:

'Christmas Trees'

Bonhoeffer in his skylit cell bleached by the flares' candescent fall, pacing out his own citadel,

restores the broken themes of praise, encourages our borrowed days, by logic of his sacrifice.

Against wild reasons of the state his words are quiet but not too quiet. We hear too late or not too late.

(New and Collected Poems 159)

Hill opens questions of self and other by subtly complicating the space of Bonhoeffer's enclosure and, by allegory and implication, the dimension of psychic interiority. Most explicitly, Hill transforms the prison cell, by the logic of rhyme, into a citadel, an exclusion from an outside becoming a fortress protecting an inside. It is as if there are two interiorities or conditions of interiority, just as there are two sources of light, from the sky outside and the flares inside. There is the first interiority, enclosed in relation to an outside that it cannot access, the light seeping in secondhand, and a second interiority that is not a function of a limitation but a creation by a freedom—the freedom to commit oneself absolutely, to deliver oneself to an absolute task. Hill dramatizes an existential recalibration of interiority by which its value is knowable from the inside, intrinsically, measured out in Bonhoeffer's own footsteps. As the poem continues, Hill shifts this spatial doubling into a temporal or historical one, with Bonhoeffer's past commitment arriving in the present of the elegiac utterance, still felt; in fact, we might consider the elegiac utterance to be the very restoration of the "broken themes of praise" to which it refers, a performance of this restoration in its own language. The poem becomes the redemption of the sacrifice it records. The danger, of course, is that the poem puts Bonhoeffer in the position of having sacrificed for the poem—that the poem is guilty of sacrificing Bonhoeffer all over again for the sake of its own emergence.

This danger is part of what Hill signals in his final lines as the fragility of such a recalibrated intrinsic value—the fragility of this value's redemption. We are left with two opposing alternatives: Bonhoeffer is simply murdered or he is not; the world finally answers to justice or it does not. There is no guarantee, but value in the possibility, or value in the way the possibility animates our ethical desire. Hill returns in his Tanner lectures to this either/or formulation of redemption in terms of the intrinsic value of poetic language:

The particular quality of our humanity that I am attempting to describe, on this occasion in terms of poetry and value, is best revealed in and through the innumerable registrations of syntax and rhythm, registrations that are common to both prose and poetry and to which as writers and as readers we attend or fail to attend. ("Rhetorics of Value" 276)

We hear, or not. The potent conceit of Hill's thought is that in certain situations the value of the entire world is at stake, and that these situations can depend on the integrity of language. The difficulty of the thought is that it gestures toward a redemption that we cannot simply know in an epistemological register, but that we can imagine in an act of hope or faith. And it is difficult because, as in the Bonhoeffer poem, it is a redemption to which we may have a secondhand relation, from the outside of someone else's existentially recalibrated interiority. The alterity of Bonhoeffer's intrinsic value to the elegiac speaker of the poem and its audience requires a poetics subtle and scrupulous enough to perform its mediation. The mediation of intrinsic value, as alterity, demands our witnessing faith secondhand. And it is this mediation, through our secondhand faith, that realizes an intrinsicity as value.

At the beginning of Fear and Trembling, Kierkegaard's pseudonym-his philosophical narrator, Johannes de Silentio—briefly describes a man who becomes obsessed with the story of Abraham's binding of Isaac on Mount Moriah in Genesis 22. We know nothing about this man beyond his devotion:

The older he became, the more often his thoughts turned to that story; his enthusiasm for it became greater and greater, and yet he could understand the story less and less. Finally, he forgot everything else because of it; his soul had but one wish, to see Abraham, but one longing, to have witnessed the event. (9)

No matter how many times he confronts this story, he cannot understand Abraham's willing dagger raised over his son—raised, really, over an entire prophesied people. He is in the position of Abraham's intermediary, testifying to his faith as Hill does to Bonhoeffer's. The difference is that de Silentio poses this man as a failed witness, overwhelmed by his task, left dumbstruck and impotent at the event: "Every time he returned from a pilgrimage to Mount Moriah, he sank down wearily, folded his hands, and said, 'No one was as great as Abraham. Who is able to understand him?"

(14). Kierkegaard has de Silentio introduce his own eloquent testimony to Abraham's faith by invoking this nameless man's failure to do so; it is as if de Silentio's articulation is shadowed by the possibility of its breakdown, or as if his testimony carries within it a kind of immanent silence to which it might at any moment return.

This opening scenario frames de Silentio's speech not simply as the positive act of speaking, then, but as the negation of a temporally and existentially prior silence. De Silentio—whose name, of course, means "the silent" or "of silence"—gives discourse about faith and witness a strange quality of ontological inversion, in which language also articulates the originating, generative silence it disrupts. Kierkegaard's discourse must carry this sense of its own ontological negativity if it is to testify to the unspeakability of Abraham's terrible faith. Faith, in Fear and Trembling, is the most dangerous as well as the most important human capacity: at any moment, God may command a monstrous ethical transgression the killing of one's child-which it is the nature of faith to obey in recognition of an imperative higher than ethical imperatives. It is in the tension between these two incommensurable registers—the ethical and religious—that language fails to be simply constative, that it must turn to the negations, irony, and silence that also occur in Hill's elegies. Kierkegaard writes:

The ethical expression for what Abraham did is that he meant to murder Isaac; the religious expression is that he meant to sacrifice Isaac—but precisely in this contradiction is the anxiety that can make a person sleepless, and yet without this anxiety Abraham is not who he is. (30)

This description of Abraham's contradiction will help us understand Hill's poetics of elegiac anxiety, where an ethical response to the dead risks implication in their sacrifice and ethical guilt seeks intelligibility as faith.

In act 1 of Hill's version of Henrik Ibsen's Brand, Einar reproaches Brand's religious zeal with a sarcastic accusation: "You're good at breathing fire, / a real hot-gospeller; / that fear-and-trembling school / has taught you very well!" (13). Hill's Kierkegaardian insult invokes the problem of articulating one's own faith to others without mediation and hoping for it to be perceived, from the outside, as anything other than emotional excess or ethical transgression. Kierkegaard has de Silentio explain: "The paradox of faith is that there is an interiority that is incommensurable with exteri-

ority" (69), an interiority that is irreducibly singular in its faith and therefore not translatable into abstract, public terms. The nature of Abraham's inexpressible interiority, however, is not simply one of private moods or feelings; it is a transformation achieved through an existential reckoning with the absurd, a belief in the necessity of what one also knows to be impossible, which results in "an interiority that is not identical, please note. with the first but with a new interiority" (69). We might understand this new interiority, incommensurable with its representations in exteriority. as the source of nonconstative language, language as negation rather than articulation—the negation of an articulate silence, the negation of negation. "[W]hat / cannot you not think?" Hill asks in "Ezekiel's Wheel," a poem sequence in memory of Christopher Okigbo, a poet who died in the Nigerian civil war in 1967 (Canaan 57). This double negative staggers toward thought about Okigbo's sacrifice; it is thought as the negation of not-thinking, as if this were the mode of thinking that could bear the cost of witnessing Okigbo's life and death. But this contortion of thought about the other's death is fragile and has its limits. Elsewhere in the sequence, Hill notes: "Here too the shrieking / of witness, zealots / high on propane / cracked / faces in the smoke" (Canaan 56). It is a description of witnessing as dementia, similar to Brand's excess; it is faith perceived from the outside, from which Kierkegaard's radically subjective existential certainty is indistinguishable from insanity or criminality.

Hill elaborates this commentary on the difficulties of mediating or exteriorizing Kierkegaardian interiority, along with the dangers of leaving it unmediated, in "An Order of Service," given here in its entirety:

He was the surveyor of his own ice-world, Meticulous at the chosen extreme, Though what he surveyed may have been nothing.

Let a man sacrifice himself, concede His mortality and have done with it; There is no end to that sublime appeal.

In such a light dismiss the unappealing Blank of his gaze, hopelessly vigilant, Dazzled by renunciation's glare. (New and Collected Poems 56)

It is a portrait of Bonhoeffer's cell become simply solipsistic, the interior light inducing a white blindness rather than illumination. The man's self-sacrifice is realized in his self-enclosure, unmediated by any other who might bear witness to his vigilance and thereby establish his value in terms of alterity. Or, put more pointedly, the man's death can have no ethical meaning—cannot be a call to responsibility or witness—because he is not in relation to others. This relation has been sacrificed. In his Tanner lectures, Hill suggests that this solipsism can be understood as a failure to inhabit the alterity of language:

My language is in me and is me; even as I, inescapably, am a miniscule part of the general semantics of the nation; and as the nature of the State has involved itself in the nature that is most intimately mine. The nature that is most intimately mine may by some be taken to represent my intrinsic value. If it is so understood, it follows that intrinsic value, thus defined, bears the extrinsic at its heart. ("Rhetorics of Value" 269)

Hill's description in "An Order of Service" of an interiority in no tension with exteriority, blankly and simply itself, implies a mode of language that cannot carry the weight of elegy or elegiac value. It is faith as ethical failure, a worthless faith.²

Mount Moriah

God decides to suspend the sacrificial process, he addresses Abraham who has just said: "Here I am." "Here I am": the first and only possible response to the call by the other, the originary moment of responsibility such as it exposes me to the singular other, the one who appeals to me. "Here I am" is the only self-presentation presumed by every form of responsibility.

—Derrida (The Gift of Death 71)

Hill's poetry solicits a rare and complex encounter between two stark conditions that have remained for the most part separate in modern thought about subjectivity: the radically elegiac situation, in which the subject responds to—takes excessive responsibility for—the past and the dead in an ethical reckoning that gives the subject its precise contours and singularity; and the situation of faith, in its absurd embrace of the

impossible, which transforms an interiority according to an unexplainable commitment into an intrinsically valuable presence, absolute in its relation to the divine absolute. The relation between Levinas's and Kierkegaard's ideas hinges on their shared suggestion that subjectivity, as the "Here I am," is answerable to some transcendent alterity, and that it is the danger and excess of this answering that constitutes the subject. And both place the subject-in-response at the scene of the death of the other, in a situation of implicit or explicit sacrifice—the elegiac subject's implicit sacrifice of the dead other for the sake of its own utterance, the religious subject's explicit sacrifice of the other for the sake of faith in God. In both situations, language is not simply a positivity, some constative presence, but the ironic negation of silence that must carry its difficult meanings obliquely, without exposing them to the light of abstract reason. Hill describes this situation in terms of professional literary critical work in "Scenes with Harlequins 6," part of a sequence in memory of Aleksandr Blok: "Exegetes may come / to speak to the silence / that has arisen. It is / not unheard of" (Canaan 21). The arising of an articulate silence puts the ontology of language in question, forcing it into its double negation: it is not unheard of to speak to silence, yet it is not exactly heard, either. Levinas and Kierkegaard hear in the preontological silence the sound of subjectivity aroused to the risks of the intrinsic valuation of its singularity; Hill's poetics, as we will see, negotiates the tension between Levinas's ethical and Kierkegaard's religious understandings of this valuation.

This tension between the two philosophers arises primarily in their different concepts of the ethical. For Kierkegaard, the singularity of the religious subject overcomes the abstraction and universality of ethical reason—what Kierkegaard also calls "social morality" (55). His concern is that, because the "ethical as such is the universal," the "single individual, sensately and psychically qualified in immediacy," must "annul his singularity to become the universal" in ethics (54). This self-annulment in the name of impersonal moral codes requires "the single individual to strip himself of the qualification of interiority and to express this in something external" (69). For Kierkegaard, the ethical is the mode by which the subject abstracts itself, renders itself interchangeable with any other subject according to universal norms. While this abstraction of the self's particularity into ethical imperatives can be admirable and courageous, and is the condition of the self-sacrificing, traditional tragic hero, it is also a condition in which the subject loses its capacity for an unmediated

relation to an absolute value. The ethical, for Kierkegaard, is the subject's mediation, and therefore its effacement:

The ethical is the universal, and as such it is also the divine. Thus it is proper to say that every duty is essentially duty to God, but if no more can be said than this, then it is also said that I actually have no duty to God. The duty becomes duty by being traced back to God, but in the duty itself I do not enter into relation to God. (68)

For Kierkegaard, to enter into relation with God, as a particular self with the meaning and value of one's own selfhood at stake, is a higher capacity than to abide by the universal ethical norms that render the self's singularity merely accidental or flawed. Faith, the "paradox that the single individual is higher than the universal" (55), makes Abraham's dagger raised over Isaac on Mount Moriah not an ethical transgression but "the expression for the most absolute devotion, [...] for God's sake" (71). The Akedah, Genesis 22, contains "a teleological suspension of the ethical" (56), the supercession of universal codes—thou shalt not kill—in a critical reckoning of the self as something other than an instance of an abstract category: as a being that can enter into "a private relation with the divine" (60) as an irreducibly unique event in the history of beings.

Levinas's similar critique of philosophical models of the subject as abstractable, interchangeable quiddities primarily intelligible according to the general imperatives to which they must answer nevertheless differs from Kierkegaard's in a fundamental way. In his short discussions of Fear and Trembling,³ Levinas argues that Kierkegaard is mistaken in equating the ethical with the universal; "the relation to the Other," he suggests, is not an "entering into, and disappearing within, generality" (Proper Names 72). At the heart of Levinas's ethical philosophy is the naked and vulnerable face of the other directly before us, a living demand that shatters the subject's solipsism and insularity, not as its abstraction but as its reckoning with an alterity that cannot be reduced to the same: "It is not I who resist the system, as Kierkegaard thought; it is the other" (Totality and Infinity 40). The unassimilable alterity of the other ruptures the totality of the subject with the experience of a fundamental, originary responsibility:

Subjectivity is in that responsibility and only irreducible subjectivity can assume a responsibility. That is what constitutes the ethical.

To be myself means, then, to be unable to escape responsibility. This excess of being, this existential exaggeration called *being me*—this outcrop of *ipseity* in being, is accomplished as a swelling of responsibility. (*Proper Names* 73)

Levinas interprets the Akedah, then, not as a story about the teleological suspension of the ethical but about the assuming of responsibility for the other, the ethical awakening of the subject. He focuses on the fact that despite his devotion to God, Abraham in the end does not sacrifice Isaac:

Abraham's attentiveness to the voice that led him back to the ethical order, in forbidding him to perform a human sacrifice, is the highest point in the drama. That he obeyed the first voice is astonishing: that he had sufficient distance with respect to that obedience to hear the second voice—that is the essential.

(77)

For Levinas, it is the second voice, heard late but not too late, that in interrupting the sacrifice calls Abraham to his full interiority, to a selfhood responsible for the other. Merold Westphal describes this Levinasian moment, in response to Kierkegaard, as "the teleological suspension of the religious" ("Levinas's Teleological Suspension" 153) in which the relation between the human other and divine other shifts:

the faithful have ears to hear but do not hear the cries of human anguish. When the Other does not get in the way of my seeing God, God will end up getting in the way of my hearing the Other. That is what the teleological suspension of the religious is all about. (158)

This interpretation of the Akedah as a story about the priority of our obligation to the human other over our relation to God, or even about our human obligation as our approach to God, converts the command "Thou shalt not kill" from a general, impersonal injunction into an existentially specific catalyst for the subject's becoming as the one uniquely responsible for the other's death.⁴

"This is plenty"

In their disagreement over whether it is Abraham's leap of faith into the absurd or his ethical response to Isaac's vulnerable face that most profoundly catalyzes him as a subject, Kierkegaard and Levinas help us consider the fraught work of modern elegy. Their disagreement is relevant to elegies that address atrocities that make historical witnessing difficult or impossible because such elegies must summon ethical responsibility at the risk of sacrificing the fragile objects of their ethical attention, the objects that cannot testify on behalf of themselves. Hill's elegies examine the elegiac tension between ethical response and sacrificial violence, demonstrating the complexity of remembrance in the aftermath of atrocity. Just as Hill's elegiac speech is structured as the negated derivation of silence, he structures memory as the negation of forgetting. He writes in Orchards of Syon:

Memory proves forgetting. Take gipsylike klezmer, soul music not everywhere unheard, not at all times accusingly silent. (15)

The first negation—in which forgetting is the truth for which memory is evidence, or even in which forgetting is the signified for which memory is the signifier—undergoes further turns of the screw in Hill's subsequent musical conceit. Klezmer music is not simply heard but "not everywhere unheard," which is to say that it is heard through its silence. The accusation of this silence is directed not merely at our forgetting but at our trying to remember without knowing our forgetfulness; Hill suggests that elegiac memory must also remember that it has failed to remember, failed to hear a soulful music. Hill's word "prove" in the first sentence is a crucial invocation—or poetic memory—of his closely related meditation in "Two Formal Elegies" published 34 years earlier, written "For the Jews of Europe." The beginning of the second elegy is, like *Orchards of Syon*, concerned with the possibility of proving memory, of proving that memory arises even in forgetting:

For all that must be gone through, their long death Documented and safe, we have enough Witnesses (our world being witness-proof). The sea flickers, roars in its wide hearth.

Here, yearly, the pushing midlanders stand
To warm themselves; men brawny with life,
Women who expect life. They relieve
Their thickening bodies, settle on scraped sand.
(New and Collected Poems 20)

Hill's acute play on "proof"—by which the world is both evidence of our witness and invulnerable to it—emphasizes the ethical difficulty of claiming that the dead are now safe in our memorial care. The dead, in some situations, are never safe; witnesses to the worst suffering and injustice are never sufficient. We might read in "hearth" here, which transforms the sea into a massive furnace, an oblique shadow of the death camps across the holiday. Hill depicts a situation in which the living inhabit—"warm themselves" in—the past they forget, witnessing and failing to witness in the same moment. The poem goes on to ask: "Is it good to remind them, on a brief screen, / Of what they have witnessed and not seen?" What is at stake in this question is the idea of historical responsibility beyond knowledge and intention, of our nonindifference to or noncausal guilt for the unjust deaths of others to whom we have no rational or legal relation. Memory, in this situation, cannot will itself to a straightforward claim to witness but is mediated through silence and forgetting in a way that communicates what Susan Gubar describes as the "breakdown of any normative relations between the mourner-poet and the manifold, nameless dead" in the context of this genocide (210).

Levinas is concerned that this non-normative relation between the living and the anonymous dead still be understood as a relation, as not nothing. He considers our involvement with the dead to be a burden of answerability, as if our own being is interrogated by the other's death:

The death of the other puts me in question, as if in that death that is invisible to the other who exposes himself to it, *I*, through my eventual indifference, became the accomplice; and as if, even before being doomed to it myself, *I* had to answer for this death of the other, and not leave the other alone in his death-bound solitude. (*Entre Nous* 145–46)

Hill's poetry, in its Kierkegaardian rhetoric of silence and negation, elaborates the problems of witnessing in terms of Levinas's ethical "as if." This is an ethical relation, as Levinas writes, "that I discover in the extreme

urgency that calls for my help, to the point where I always come too late" (God, Death, and Time 187).

Hill's remarkable elegy "September Song" creates this belated, selfquestioning, ethically obligated voice implicated in the death of the other and capable of sacrificial violence.

September Song

born 19.6.32-deported 24.9.42

Undesirable you may have been, untouchable you were not. Not forgotten or passed over at the proper time.

As estimated, you died. Things marched, sufficient, to that end.

Just so much Zyklon and leather, patented terror, so many routine cries.

(I have made an elegy for myself it is true)

September fattens on the vines. Roses flake from the wall. The smoke of harmless fires drifts to my eyes.

This is plenty. This is more than enough. (New and Collected Poems 55)

These first lines work by negation, the repeated "un" and "not" affirming the death without naming it, without trying to bring death into the realm of positivity, just as the introductory dates identify no named person. The unnamed or unnamable disorients the language into its initial strangeness: line breaks midclause; irregular syntax in which adjectives precede both subjects and verbs; the omitted "you" and verb in the second sentence; the momentarily dumbstruck stuttering, at the heart of these three lines, of "not. Not"; the negation "undesirable" becoming the double negation "not untouchable," a double negation that becomes most fatally ironic

in the low and mournful tones of "not forgotten." With this phrase, the poem makes memory not an event on its own terms but a derived and secondary event, the negation of forgetting, an ethically ambiguous event that becomes part of the crime at hand. Skeptical in this way of its own memorial project, in omitting "you" from the second sentence the poem tries to leave the dead alone even as, despite itself, it continues with the address. The child is then not "passed over" by the poem as well as by the Nazis, as if this kind of poetry of witness were a latter-day plague to add to God's biblical locusts and boils and slaying of first-born sons. That this way of remembering may be so dangerous suggests we read the earlier phrase through the full stop, "not Not forgotten," a convoluted way of saying that the child has been forgotten by being remembered in the wrong way.

The grammatical negations, syntactical self-interruptions, and unlikely biblical allusion inaugurate our ethical disorientation, making our relation to the dead a function of a negative presence. Levinas writes: "The relation with the death of the other is not a knowledge [savoir] about the death of the other, nor the experience of that death in its particular way of annihilating being" but "an emotion, a movement, a disquietude within the unknown" (God, Death, and Time 16); it is "an unknown that is not purely negative but rather in nearness without knowledge" (18). Like Kierkegaard, Levinas uses negation and double negation to describe our mysterious and essential relation to the death of the other, a nonknowledge and nonexperience that nevertheless is not nothing, that is some third term between presence and absence. He asks, "Is not death something other than the dialectic of being and nothingness in the flow of time? Does the end, or negativity, exhaust the death of the other?" (14) Trying to think the inexhaustion, the oblique presence, of the other's absence, Levinas turns to a concept of temporality that is not simply of the order of presence and the present: "being affected by death is [...] an affection of the present by the nonpresent"; it invokes a moment "foreign to every present" that refracts the self's synchrony into diachrony and refers to a past that was never a present, "a past which no memory could resurrect as a present" ("Phenomenon and Enigma" 68). This idea of a moment that is of time but beyond the subject's temporality, a past that was never any subject's present, inhabits the final words of Hill's first stanza: "at the proper time." The proper time, for Levinas, is the time proper to the self-enclosed and totalized subject, an endless present that is the self's property, invulnerable

to the nonpresent that interrupts the self with the ethical claims of the other.

The only explicit "I" that remains in this poem, the grammatical sign of subjectivity claiming itself, is displaced both to parentheses and to something other than the present tense. "I have made / an elegy," tensed in the past perfect, doesn't coincide with the present tense of the utterance, suggesting that this elegy is not being spoken so much as remembered or repeated. We might imagine here Levinas's ethical subject, primordially involved in the death of the other, as always already having composed such an elegy. We might even consider, along with Levinas, the very idea of identity as something founded and organized in an immemorial past by its responsibility for the other. The noncoinciding of this elegiac voice with itself—grammatically bracketed from both its principal discourse and its present tense—connotes the alterity at the heart of ethical subjectivity, the construction of selfhood that makes the mourned-for other its constitutive element. Of all the possible referents for the "it" hanging so perilously at the end of the middle line of the parenthesis, perhaps the most intriguing is the possibility that the "it" that is "true" refers to the immediately preceding word "myself": this elegiac self is the true self, given shape and life by its witnessing to the other's death. As Levinas writes, "the 'me' only surfaces in its uniqueness in responding for the other in a responsibility from which there is no flight, in a responsibility from which I could not be free" (God, Death, and Time 20). For Levinas, subjectivity emerges from a radical accountability to the other, an asymmetrical and nonreciprocal debt carried at the heart of being.

But this elegiac response is not innocent of sacrificial violence. The subplot of the poem, submerged in the opening dates, is that Hill himself was born one day before the elegized child. He is almost the same, but different; he survives but is not historically innocent in this survival, not isolated in the immanence of his being. Levinas describes our "responsibility for another in bearing his misfortune or his end as if one were guilty of causing it. This is the ultimate nearness. To survive as a guilty one" (God, Death, and Time 39). Derrida has argued that the nature of this guilt in proximity to the dead other involves Kierkegaardian sacrifice. In The Gift of Death, a complex meditation on history, responsibility, faith, and the economy of the gift, Derrida speculates on the qualities of faith that are based on "a form of involvement with the other" and, in a comple-

mentary fashion, on ethical responsibility as an "experience of absolute decisions made outside of knowledge or given norms, made through the very ordeal of the undecidable" (5). He brings Kierkegaard and Levinas together at the point where "the border between the ethical and the religious becomes more than problematic" to trace a subjectivity capable of responding to the death of the other by transforming its death into a sacrifice and by replacing the other's sacrifice with a self-sacrifice (84). In other words, he draws on these two philosophers of singularity to consider the subject as that which is implicated in and capable of sacrifice even while animated by guilt for it. This capacity for sacrifice is the subject's private enigma, its secret, but a secret unknown even to itself and therefore without a content it might divulge. The secret might be shared, but not revealed:

To share a secret is not to know or to reveal the secret, it is to share we know not what: nothing that can be determined. What is a secret that is a secret about nothing and a sharing that doesn't share anything? (80)

"September Song" leaves us with a brooding image that does not tell us what it shares:

September fattens on the vines. Roses flake from the wall. The smoke of harmless fires drifts to my eyes.

This is plenty. This is more than enough.

It is the voice of a subject in ethical proximity to the dead other, unable to articulate the meaning of its response or even to whom it is directed. Hill's language of elegy is also the language of secrecy: it carries the panic of an interiority incommensurable with any exteriority, yet it suggests that this incommensurable elegiac interiority can establish the value of alterity, of the dead, for the selfsame presence of the living. Giving value to the dead demands a sacrifice of the living's sovereignty over its language, so that in witnessing the dead we speak beyond ourselves and even at our own expense. In this speech beyond speech is the secret of a singularity prepared for sacrifice.

Notes

1. Michael Weston has rigorously examined the compatibility of their two critiques of philosophy in chapter 7 of Kierkegaard and Modern Continental Philosophy, where he argues that both are concerned with recuperating

the first-person position from which the philosopher must himself speak. The essential character of this "position" is that I am not for myself a particular case of a generality: and it is this which required for both thinkers a reference to a "transcendence" which itself precludes conceptuality and which therefore involves us in a paradoxicality when we try to speak about it. (167)

- 2. David Lloyd's description of the "merging of private and public realms" in *Mercian Hymns* is analogous to Hill's description of the extrinsic at the heart of interiority; Lloyd examines how Hill creates "an idiom that allows a public voice to take on the intensity and immediacy of a private consciousness, and a private voice to gain the breadth, resonance, and authority of a public persona" (407).
- 3. In addition to his two short essays on Kierkegaard in *Proper Names*, Levinas makes a handful of references to Kierkegaard elsewhere. In "Phenomenon and Enigma," for example, he takes up Kierkegaard favorably and conceptualizes "enigma" as "The God who spoke" but "said nothing, passed incognito," as the "Kierkegaardian God [...] revealed only to be persecuted and unrecognized" (66). In "God and Philosophy" he subtly rejects Kierkegaardian "fear and trembling" as an experience that precludes ethical "dis-interest" (172). And in *Totality and Infinity* he contrasts his model of ethical subjectivity to "the egoist cry of the subjectivity, still concerned for happiness or salvation, as in Kierkegaard" (305).
- 4. Claire Elise Katz also provides a detailed examination of the disagreement between Levinas and Kierkegaard about the Akedah. Merold Westphal puts their disagreements in the context of profound commonalities ("Transparent Shadow"), and Jacques Derrida chides Levinas for ignoring a confluence in their thought ("Metaphysics and Violence"). For an important analysis of "Levinas's commonality with Kierkegaard on issues of fulfillment of infinite demand and the radical alterity of the other" even though this "is in tension with most of Levinas's explicit valuations of Kierkegaard's thought" (an analysis that focuses on books other than Fear and Trembling) see Jamie Ferreira 127. And for an ambitious, persuasive intellectual-historical argument that "the Kierkegaard enthusiasm" in France in the 1930s "played a major—indeed, essential—role in the origins of Levinas's doctrine" (Moyn 165) see chapter 5 of Samuel Moyn's Origins of the Other.

5. Giorgio Agamben takes up Primo Levi's fiction and commentary to develop a relevant paradox of witnessing certain atrocities, a paradox in which the complete witness is by definition incapable of reporting them and any survivor capable of speech is by definition not a complete witness. He discusses Levi's forbidding account of a child, about three years old, who was liberated from Auschwitz but unable to speak in anything but inarticulate sounds. His "non-language or dark and maimed language" cannot bear witness to anything, but Levi claims that "he bears witness through these words of mine" (qtd. in Agamben 38). Considering Levi's claim, Agamben describes the paradox by which

not even the survivor can bear witness completely, can speak his own lacuna. This means that testimony is the disjunction between two impossibilities of bearing witness; it means that language, in order to bear witness, must give way to a non-language in order to show the impossibility of bearing witness. The language of testimony is a language that no longer signifies and that, in not signifying, advances into what is without language, to the point of taking on a different insignificance—that of the complete witness, that of he who by definition cannot bear witness. (39)

I consider this description of testimonial language that enters into a nonsignificance reverberating with the silence of the complete witness—the dead or destroyed one—to be a more extreme version of the impulse I trace in the fragmentations, negations, and ironies in Hill's poetry.

6. This elegiac lapse from the present is especially striking in contrast to the insistent present tense of Hill's Mercian Hymn 25: "I speak this in memory of my grandmother [...] I speak this in memory of my grandmother" (New and Collected Poems 117).

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The Economy of Recognition in Howards End

Kim Shirkhani

In recent years, interest in E. M. Forster has revived among scholars working in postcolonial and race studies, with new attention being paid to anti-imperialist and pro-Eastern strains in his writings; and also among those working in gender and queer theory, who have developed a body of interpretation of his posthumously published novel *Maurice*. But there has not been a similar reconstruction of Forster among scholars interested in class, generally thought to be Forster's most embarrassing blind spot. This blindness is perfectly illustrated, critics claim, by the narrator's dismissive pronouncement in *Howards End*—"We are not concerned with the very poor. They are unthinkable" (36)—and by what most consider the novel's condescending treatment of the lower-middle-class character Leonard Bast.² It is ironic, given the narrator's scolding of Helen Schlegel for deeming Leonard "not a man, but a cause" (246), that Forster himself is widely scolded for doing the same thing.

Leonard has conventionally been viewed as a flat and unsympathetic character, a sacrifice to a larger argument Forster is trying to make about the state of high culture in modern English society. "Bast is anxious and envious among the rentier intelligentsia," writes Jonathan Rose, "and his attempts to acquire culture are hopeless. Forster frankly stamps him inferior to most rich people" (402). The same kind of treatment of Leonard is at stake in a complementary reading of the whole Bast subplot as foremost an expression of liberal guilt. For Henry Turner, Leonard and his wife, Jacky, are "mere symbols," figures for surplus and the human cost of capitalism" (339) that allow Forster to work through his guilt over living off the fruits of a system he finds unjust and dehumanizing, yet without which he would not have had the means to become a writer. Others claim that it is the characters Margaret and Helen Schlegel who are using

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Leonard to assuage their guilt and that Forster is trying to critique their guilt-driven interference with Leonard's life. What no critic questions is the idea that Leonard has been degraded by virtue of the political interest taken in him, by being looked on as a "cause"—whether by Forster, in portraying the clerk as a victim of the class system, or by the Schlegels, in presuming to help him improve himself.

These criticisms voice one side of a current debate that Nancy Fraser has identified as being between recognition and redistribution—between, on the one hand, a respect for difference, whether in the multiculturalist sense of located identity or in the poststructuralist sense of singularity and otherness, and, on the other, an abstract sense of justice and advocacy of socioeconomic equality. The two principles seem to be at cross-purposes, Fraser observes, in that recognition involves positively valuing difference, whereas redistribution equates economic difference with deprivation and, accordingly, aims at eliminating this particular difference (42). Wai Chee Dimock is troubled by the very concept of economic justice, by its implication that instances of human suffering can be measured, compared, compensated for. In *Residues of Justice*, whose argument dovetails with that of her introduction (coauthored with Michael Gilmore) to *Rethinking Class*, Dimock explains:

The search for justice . . . is very much an exercise in abstraction, and perhaps an exercise in reduction as well, stripping away apparent differences to reveal an underlying order, an order intelligible, in the long run, perhaps only in quantitative terms. (2)

Dimock points out what most people distant from power might instinctively affirm, that justice is a problematic idea, one whose self-contradictions are constantly on display in its practical applications. But her concerns are primarily epistemological, specifically directed at the problem of cognitive violence wrought by the categorizing act. Accordingly, she ends up not critiquing but rather celebrating the limits of justice, positively valuing the fact that it cannot live up to its self-presentation as total and instead leaves "residues," things that fall outside its terms and thus remain unaccounted for. Her view issues, in narrative terms, in a mode of representation we might call noninterventionist, one that does not reduce the subject to being merely a "transcript" of his or her "material conditions" but instead keeps a certain distance, endowing the subject with the "density and dignity of the unknown, untypified, unspoken for" (93).

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While Dimock rightly illuminates the potential symbolic violence of economic thinking, to dismiss material considerations entirely in critically approaching Howards End would be to ignore one of the novel's most important insights: modes of and possibilities for thought are contingent on and situated in material conditions. When Margaret Schlegel comments "all our thoughts are the thoughts of six-hundred pounders" and "independent thoughts are in nine cases out of ten the result of independent means" (100), Forster is asking us not only to notice how money conditions one's inner life but also to contemplate the effects of calling attention to this fact. While these observations might seem generally reductive, actually they are differentially so; they are more reductive of those with independent means—for instance, Margaret herself—in that they undercut the accomplishment of those who, by means of expensive training, end up displaying the kind of knowledge that is socially recognized as valuable. And, to the same extent, they offer a defense of those whose less expensively trained thoughts do not, on the evidence, enjoy the same kind of social value. To one in the latter position, a critical disregard of material conditions can feel like a threatening erasure of something she wants to be accounted for-a negative constituent of her identity, whose effects are often insecure living conditions and exclusion from socially desirable occupations, effects that are implicitly understood by society as expressions of lesser inherent merit.5

Thus, while attention to deprivation can have a humiliating effect on the dispossessed, it might also allow them to distance themselves from their material difficulties, to take such difficulties less personally. It is as an expansion, not a circumscription, of interpretive options that Zygmunt Bauman frames projects such as Pierre Bourdieu's, aimed at "allowing those who suffer to discover the possibility of relating their sufferings to social causes" (Liquid Modernity 215). Whereas Dimock celebrates a basic inaccessibility of human feeling to theoretical understanding, Bauman and Bourdieu suggest that to regard feelings of suffering as incommensurable—as singular, unquantifiable, inaccessible to theoretical understanding-leads to glossing over the difference between conditions that are inevitable and those that are political. We must not forget the distinction between human mortality and infant mortality, in short, lest we become complicit in what Bauman calls the "denial of the human-made, non-inevitable, contingent and alterable nature of social order" (Liquid Modernity 215).

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Informed as it is by similar debates over "Mr. Basts" taking place at the turn of the century, Howards End anticipates its contemporary critics. As the Wilcoxes and the Schlegels debate with each other whether Leonard should be left alone to "look after his own affairs" (116) (the Wilcox view) or warrants intervention as a representative of a large-scale social problem (the Schlegel view), the novel asks: Is it more important to respect Leonard or to alleviate, by critiquing, his predicament? Does critiquing his predicament alleviate it or simply add insult to injury? Is the critique itself the injury? Can one respect Leonard without critiquing his predicament? Recognition or redistribution? Although in his portrayal of the penurious, culture-struck clerk, Forster might not solve these problems attendant on social theory, he does affirm the poverty of not doing theory at all. Although he is attuned to the appeal of the "unknown, untypified, unspoken for"—these are in fact the positive qualities of the eponymous house's genius loci, Mrs. Wilcox, and of the surrounding countryside—he is still sensible of the danger that making a virtue out of leaving things unknown might authorize forms of disregard that are not, and are not meant to be, gentle. It is not Mrs. Wilcox who admonishes Margaret that Leonard has a "life of his own" that she knows "nothing about," or who doubts whether it is Margaret's place "to conclude it is an unsuccessful life" (116). It is Mr. Wilcox, the new imperialist businessman, articulating his classical liberal economic principle of laissez-faire.

Michael Levenson has drawn our attention to the significance in the novel of a distinction between old and new liberalism. Old liberalism, which branches out of Adam Smith's political economy, Levenson characterizes as "essentially a negative activity, devoted to the removal of constraints, sure in the belief that once individuals were allowed to develop freely, an 'ethical harmony' would ensue" (303). The new liberalism, expounded at the turn of the twentieth century by such figures as L.T. Hobhouse and J.A. Hobson, was interventionist, dedicated to social reform, collectivism, the regulation of business, and wealth redistribution through taxation. But, as Levenson notes, whereas Forster's idea of personal relationships links him to the older liberalism—he "chooses private before public, friend before country" (304)6—Forster's economic views line up more closely with the new. While the "doctrine of laissez-faire is the only one that seems to work in the world of the spirit," Forster writes in his 1946 essay "The Challenge of Our Time," it "will not work in the material world. It has led to the black market and the capitalist jungle. We

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must have planning and ration-books and controls, or millions of people will have nowhere to live and nothing to eat" (56). So we are returned to Henry Wilcox's principles and the question of how to make sense of his respect for Leonard's privacy, his seeming defense of Leonard's otherness.

In fact, what Henry is articulating is an early species of negative recognition, an approach that Bauman has described as developing in the historical phase he calls "liquid modernity." The keynote of this deterritorializing phase is increasing disengagement of those in power from the lives of those not in power, as physical proximity and interference become less necessary (become, in fact, impediments) to accumulating and maintaining capital. Henry's free-trade politics, his involvement in global business, and his inaccessibility to what he calls the "ordinary plain man" (116); Leonard's location in the class structure as an unskilled (socalled), white-collar, fatefully temporary worker; and the novel's thematic concerns with rising suburbs and ceaseless flux—all can be understood as anticipating liquid modernity. In this "liquid" situation, recognition (a respect for difference and respectful distance) can no longer be viewed as the straightforward victory that it was when capital was committed to particular workforces in particular locations. When Henry tells Margaret that she ought not to presume to "know" Leonard, he is effectively telling her not to contemplate—but especially not to talk about—Leonard's insecurity and his state of perpetual worry, or the ways in which this situation might be connected to or even support Henry's own situation of relative security and freedom.

Forster's descriptions of Leonard are, one must admit, at times unflattering. But in illuminating Leonard's shortcomings, the novel is seeking both to challenge the logic by which social or economic failure is reflexively moralized into personal failure (rather than being related to material disadvantages or the standards by which society happens to judge) and to critique the system by which such moralization in turn legitimates and thus helps to reproduce that failure. Leonard's struggles also make vivid to the reader how subtle and painful this cycle can be, for not only is his physical being precarious, beset as he is by malnourishment and latent disease, but also he is kept from what he most desires in life—to write books, immerse himself in literature, and converse with people adept at such activities. Neither is Leonard portrayed as incapable of comprehending his situation, as Rose implies he is. Rather, in his brushes with the

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rich and cultured he gains an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the forces at work against him. Of course, the novel must strike a fragile balance here. For the more successful Leonard's character is, the more idealist the novel becomes, in the sense of contradicting its own vision of culture as founded on wealth. And the more appealing and sympathetic Leonard is, the less convinced the reader might be of the urgency of the problems the novel identifies, and the closer Forster comes to romanticizing poverty.

Leonard as a "cause"

One may as well begin with the most notorious passage: "We are not concerned with the very poor. They are unthinkable, and only to be approached by the statistician or the poet" (36). Claude Summers voices the critical consensus when he calls these comments a "statement that not only limits the scope of the book but also acknowledges the limitations of the liberal ethos that governs it" (115). Elizabeth Langland, although admitting some degree of irony, views the passage as exemplifying Forster's "comments on the underprivileged [that] seem to attempt sarcasm but end up sounding defensive" (254). It is difficult to find a critic who interprets the statement as purely ironic, despite its being followed by a retraction of sorts: "This story deals with gentlefolk, or with those who are obliged to pretend that they are gentlefolk" (36). Another equivocation quickly follows-"The boy . . . knew that he was poor, and would admit it: he would have died sooner than confess any inferiority to the rich. This may be splendid of him"—and then, most controversially, comes a catalogue of Leonard's flaws:

But he was inferior to most rich people, there is not the least doubt of it. He was not as courteous as the average rich man, nor as intelligent, nor as healthy, nor as lovable. His mind and his body had been alike underfed, because he was poor, and because he was modern they were always craving better food. (36–37)

An early Marxist critic of the novel, D. S. Savage, sounded the note that most critics since have echoed⁸ when he interpreted this passage as simply class bigotry on Forster's part: "Because he does not enjoy the financial advantages of the Schlegels, Leonard Bast's aspirations towards culture are made to appear pathetic in their hopelessness" (59). For Savage, Howards

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End suggests that "culture and the good life depend upon economic security." And the apparent elitism in the narrator's description of Leonard appears to be reinforced by Margaret's initial dismissal of Leonard: "She knew this type very well—the vague aspirations, the mental dishonesty, the familiarity with the outsides of books" (92).

But this evidence is complicated—not only in that Margaret cannot be easily equated with Forster (in fact, the narration is far from consistently focalized by Margaret), but also in that the statement that culture depends on economic security cannot be considered prejudicial toward the poor unless culture is being held up as an unmitigated or inherent good, as it is not in Howards End. Instead, the novel critiques high culture not only for its increasing irrelevance in a brutal, Wilcoxian world of "telegrams and anger" (82) but also for the ways in which it is a game of power, exclusion, and affiliation. Even Margaret is made to realize the latter, as when she apologizes to Mrs. Wilcox for having seemed to forget the older woman's presence at a lunch party where she was busy "zigzagging with her friends over Thought and Art" (62). Ashamed, she says, "We lead the lives of gibbering monkeys. Mrs. Wilcox—really—We have something quiet and stable at the bottom. We really have." That Margaret herself is critical of this game makes her noting Leonard's blunders all the more ambiguous in the moral economy of the novel.

Most of Margaret's criticisms of Leonard are actually criticisms of his situation, of the way his aspirations are impeded by his distance from power and the kinds of knowledge that power reproduces. Thus she articulates a position similar to Forster's in "The Challenge of Our Time": while believing in an inner, subjective realm that must be protected from political intervention, she at the same time sees a connection between this inner realm and societal conditions, and advocates intervention when it comes to the latter. Although a general antipathy in contemporary, post-Foucauldian criticism toward the idea of social intervention has led to great emphasis on the misguidedness of the Schlegels' approach, Forster is asking us to pay attention to its difference from a more sinister alternative, which is represented by Henry. This is the economic laissez-faire of the older, Adam Smith liberalism supplemented by late nineteenth-century Spenserian social Darwinism. Henry expresses this position directly, as an argument, and indirectly as well, as a habit of mind, the tendency to focus narrowly on the isolated case. Forster makes it clear that for Henry a tight focus is strategic, whether consciously or unconsciously: seeing

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the world in bits allows him not to contemplate the remote effects of his investments.

Indeed, despite Henry's practical links to new imperial expansionism, his style of thought is ad hoc and particularist. Henry thinks small, cogitates "item by item" (78), in fragments that never cohere into a big or clear picture. As the narrator tells us, "Henry had implied his business rather than described it, and the formlessness and vagueness that one associates with Africa itself had brooded over the main sources of his wealth" (155). Forster's reader would likely have recognized in Henry what Hobson, in his widely read book Imperialism, had pointed to as a "peculiarly British" idiom: a "genius of inconsistency," an "inhibition of the faculty of comparison" (210). Hobson had argued that this habit—this customary failure on the part of the English to think about their actions in the world with a sense of "causes and consequences"—was among the key "moral and sentimental factors" enabling imperialism. Forster would later call this tendency "self-muddling," similarly associating it with a will to dominate and tracing it to the culture of the elite English public schools.9 It is clearly present in the representation of Wilcoxism: the "manner of the committee room,""not mak[ing] the mistake of handling human affairs in the bulk, but dispos[ing] of them item by item, sharply" (78), being "incapable of grouping the past" (204). Henry's fragments seem to be held together by some notion of an invisible hand, the natural market force by which, in Smith's theory, society is supposed to be improved when—and only when-individuals pursue their own economic self-interest. But Helen frames this approach in the terms of negative recognition, grouping Henry with men who

cut down the salaries of their clerks, and stunt the independence of all who may menace their comfort, but yet they believe that somehow good—and it is always that sloppy "somehow"—will be the outcome, and that in some mystical way the Mr. Basts of the future will benefit because the Mr. Basts of today are in pain. (152)

Forster frequently calls attention to Henry's particularism. When the Schlegel sisters seek Henry's advice on behalf of Leonard, they do so in a language suited to his inclinations. Margaret approaches Henry by saying, "I'll just put our special case to Mr. Wilcox," and Helen adds, "Yes, do. He'll be more lenient to a special case" (105). Later, when Margaret

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appeals to Henry to offer Leonard a job, she is sure to remind him, "he's rather a special case" (182). Margaret and Helen use this language self-consciously, given that their habitual mode is to categorize and generalize about social reality, to draw out connections with political implications. The Schlegel-Wilcox difference culminates in the scene in which Henry, exposed as having once had an affair with Leonard's wife, tries to punish Helen for having had an affair with Leonard. Provoked by Henry's audacity in claiming "The two cases are different," Margaret calls him "criminally muddled" and tries to force him to connect the two parts of his double standard: "say to yourself," she demands, "What Helen has done, I've done" (244). Thus, although appeals to justice by way of comparisons can be a form of violence to the notion of difference, this example shows such an appeal used to expose, and thus undercut, the rhetorical abuse of "difference" as a mask for discrimination based on hierarchy.

Also importantly, although the Schlegels insist on bringing general conditions to bear on the particular case, they do not attempt to sum up the particular case, the individual subject, by reference to general conditions. Their interest in distributive justice does not blind them to the richness and diversity of experience. Rather it helps them to resist the force that social gradations can exert on the imagination, a force that guides people to regard those with resources as inherently more interesting-"richer," more complex—than those without. This plays out on the everyday level in their refusal to observe expected hierarchical distinctions in addressing others. Against the hierarchy of seniority, Helen, on asking a neighboring farming family's child his name, directly tells him her own. "That was Helen all over," says the narrator, "the Wilcoxes, too, would ask a child its name, but they never told their names in return" (237). This principle becomes a point of contention between Margaret and Henry. When, in one particular conversation, she has made a series of clever observations ending with the question "Houses are alive. No?" he dismisses her musings and then asks critically, "Didn't you talk rather like that to your office boy?" by which he means Leonard:

"Did I?—I mean I did, more or less. I talk the same way to every one—or try to."

"Yes, I know. And how much do you suppose that he understood of it?"

"That's his lookout. I don't believe in suiting my conversation to my company." (123)

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While one might, like Douglass Thomson, interpret Margaret's "democratic . . . conviction to 'talk the same to everyone—or try to'" as a "consistency [that] robs experience of diversity" (125), here it has more meaning as a violation of class homogamy, as Bourdieu might say, a protest against one of the key markers of her class's social distance from Leonard's class. And yet Margaret's equalizing conversational policy represents a refusal to equalize in another, limited sense: she seeks to treat everyone in the same way as a refusal to treat everyone of a particular (lower) class in the same (snubbing or indifferent) way.

Because Margaret's taking Leonard's part most often assumes the form of clarifying the material conditions he faces, it is easy to mistake her gestures for the kind of economic reductivism that Dimock warns against. But the novel is more worried about precisely the opposite problem, the vicious circle by which systematically ignoring the effects of material conditions on one's life chances leads to the moralization of poverty, which in turn reinforces official indifference toward poverty on the grounds that it is deserved. 10 Because Henry does not connect material causes and effects in contemplating the social order, he cannot understand behavior except as an expression of a hazy moral quality he calls character. It is to this quality, or its lack, that he ascribes Leonard's suspiciousness when the Schlegels quiz him about his job, maintaining "we should never have had that outburst if he was a gentleman" (115). To this Margaret agrees, but with an essential difference: she explains Leonard's conduct not in terms of a difference in reaction but a difference in the ability to hide that reaction—that is, to the undeniable fact of Leonard's lack of training in social subterfuge. "I admit it willingly," she responds, "A gentleman would have kept his suspicions to himself." By this response she seeks to remove matters of social behavior from the moral realm while further insinuating that the behavior in question is a sign not of virtue but of artfulness—that is, a social strategy.

Margaret's anti-idealist views are most overtly on display when she scandalizes her discussion club peers by claiming that "independent thoughts are in nine cases out of ten the result of independent means" and that, therefore, it will do no good to approach the problem of "Mr. Basts" through moral appeals. "Money's [what is] educational," she tells them, "It's far more educational than the things it buys. . . . Don't dole them out poetry-books and railway-tickets like babies" (100). She roils the morally minded group by suggesting that poverty is a matter of Mr. Bast's

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resources, not "his ideals" (101), and that, if anything, the latter depends on the former. When they object, asking, "what it would profit Mr. Bast if he gained the whole world and lost his own soul?" she responds, "Nothing, but he would not gain his soul until he had gained a little of the world."

The difficulty that Margaret, and the novel as a whole, faces is a difficulty for class analysis in general, that of maintaining a distinction between the effects of critical description and the effects of the system being described. While it is true that one can humiliate by identifying oppression, to assert that such identification is by definition humiliating is to disable social critique, to shame potential critics in advance by equating condemnation of the class system with condemnation of the people who get the worst of that system. John Carey, for example, accuses *Howards End* of disparaging working people in describing the Basts' food as unappetizing and unnourishing. But Carey's critique is problematic, for it presupposes, first, that real-life Basts are essentially, inevitably connected with cheap, canned food, and, second, that if the food repulses the reader, this response should necessarily redound negatively upon the Basts, rather than the system by which *someone* must eat this food, the system that creates the position the Basts occupy.

It is the food—not its eaters—that *Howards End* is condemning, not least because it is inadequate, as Leonard has to "convince his stomach that it was having a nourishing meal" (43). But the novel also demonstrates the ease with which this type of critique can be misunderstood or misrepresented, by way of Henry's response to Margaret when she tries to commiserate with Leonard's situation:

"Your mistake is this, and it is a very common mistake. This young bounder has a life of his own. What right have you to conclude it is an unsuccessful life? . . . You know nothing about him. He probably has his own joys and interests—wife, children, snug little home. That's where we practical fellows"—he smiled—"are more tolerant than you intellectuals. We live and let live, and assume that things are jogging on fairly well elsewhere, and that the ordinary plain man may be trusted to look after his own affairs." (116)

Henry thus redescribes Margaret's critique of Leonard's structural disadvantages as a critique of Leonard himself, a move allied with his refusal on a rhetorical level to reduce people to their economic circumstances

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even as he invests in a system whereby people's life choices are reduced by these very circumstances. While contemporary readers might see Henry's gesture, in isolation, as an admirable refusal to interfere, we would do best to keep in mind that he can "let live" because he knows that the sheer force of capital, if let alone, will always give an advantage to those who have it over those who do not. His words uncannily anticipate Bauman's description of negative recognition, a "posture of indifference and detachment" that says of the dispossessed, "let them be, and bear the consequences of what they are" ("Great War" 144). On a simpler level, Henry's logic implies a questionable double standard, that what is good for clerks ("a snug little home") is a different matter from what is good for wealthy investors ("the Wilcoxes collect houses as [a child] collects tadpoles," says Helen, and she counts seven in their possession [134]).

This problematic casts new light on the passage that introduces Leonard. When Leonard is described as "inferior to most rich people," this looks less like the narrator's own judgment and more like one focalized by the standards of the society Leonard wishes to enter-and therefore an ironic judgment on the judgment of others. And we might perceive the narrator's overall tone—it "may be splendid" of Leonard not to admit inferiority—not as serious but as satirical. Indeed, while the narrator on one level wants to lay out the facts of Leonard's dilemma, he also wants to undercut normative interpretations of these facts. So he adopts the tone of one who would judge Leonard sincerely, then undermines his assessments by an upsurge of manner—the qualifiers, the intensifiers, the protestingtoo-much negation of claiming "not the least doubt" of Leonard's inferiority. While it is only in recent years that critics have complicated the idea that Forster's narrator in Howards End is more or less straightforward, the satirical elements and ambiguities of this passage signal that Forster is up to some irony. It seems in fact that he is being intentionally provocative mocking both those who would interpret Leonard's inability to meet the standards of society as a sign of his inferiority and also those (perhaps the same people) who would, as Glen Cavaliero puts it, "sentimentalize poverty as such" (113) and thus implicitly advocate for its preservation.

This complexity of the narrator's stance perfectly recapitulates the complexity of Forster's challenge to the reader in portraying Leonard as he does. While carefully recognizing the clerk and his social and intellectual aspirations, Forster does not fail to emphasize the consequences of his lack of resources. These consist not only in his immediate situation

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but also, and perhaps more importantly, in his difficulty in cultivating the personal qualities that could help him escape from it, qualities such as good health and certain manners, ways of speaking, and styles of dress. The novel addresses the contradictions in liberal capitalist society, which depends on the idea of individual mobility, by looking at the material underpinnings of that putative mobility. If the kinds of personal traits that qualify one for opportunities in society are more a matter of subtle, early-acquired habits than of skills that can be consciously pursued and honed, then they represent not equal opportunity but rather self-reproducing lack and oppression. When, instead, Henry describes Leonard as either "jogging on fairly well" or as failing for obscure reasons, he suggests that the clerk's fate is merely a matter of chance and character and discounts the notion that there might be structural forces at work.

Like Margaret's recognition of Leonard's artlessness, Forster's claim that it takes generations to acquire an aura of cultural self-possession is an acknowledgment that high culture reproduces power differentially—that it insures that learning by rote, as Leonard must try to do in his scanty free time, simply does not confer the same advantages as does learning by what Bourdieu calls "insensible familiarization within the family circle" (3), as the Schlegels have done. Bourdieu's point about such family-circle training is of course not that it is superior but that it tends to prevail, because the cultural field is structured in such a way as to reward it, to support the reproduction of culture among those whose predecessors already have it. He does not claim that no single Leonard Bast can learn or luck his way into the dominant group, just that Leonard Basts as a group are at a considerable disadvantage.

Leonard as a "man"

The dramatization of Leonard's failures enriches his character, both by making his coming as far as he has seem all the more remarkable and by emphasizing his appreciation of things that other characters are seen smugly to take for granted. The Schlegels do this, as they also unwittingly reinforce class barriers by a kind of highbrow antiacademicism, a tendency among the cultured and well educated to elevate authentic experience over book learning. This dynamic is played out when the Schlegels confront Leonard's jarring (because overly intense) expressions of desire for knowledge. After Leonard's adventurous nightlong walk into the coun-

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tryside, the sisters are impressed by the bold originality of his action but keep beating back his explanation of it in terms of the books that inspired it. In effect they allow Leonard to be nature or part of the landscape, but not to interpret it. Helen even affects a Cockney accent in trying to coax Leonard back to earth when he digresses from his adventure with a literary reference: "Yes, but the wood," she insists, "This 'ere wood. How did you get out of it?" (95).

Forster seems to realize Leonard's dilemma here, to realize that someone like Margaret can throw her books out only because she has internalized what they have to offer, whereas Leonard has not. Then, too, Forster has so staged things that without Leonard's strenuous striving, he never would have met the Schlegels, to whose influence he owes the possibly enriching experience of second-guessing the value of culture. Similarly, when the Schlegels quiz Leonard about the company he works for, the narrator comments directly that not knowing or adopting a light touch about knowing is a luxury afforded only to those who do not have to get their living by filling a slot in the system:

He was tempted to say that he knew nothing about the thing at all. But a commercial training was too strong for him. . . . In his circle to be wrong was fatal. The Miss Schlegels did not mind being wrong. They were genuinely glad that they had been misinformed. (111)

But of course the truth is that he indeed knows nothing about the thing at all, and by design. When he is asked to describe the health of the firm for which he works—in insurance, ironically—he is said to have "no idea," to understand "his own corner of the machine, but nothing beyond it" (110):

To him, as to the British public, the Porphyrion was the Porphyrion of the advertisement—a giant, in the classical style, but draped sufficiently. . . . A large sum of money was inscribed below, and you drew your own conclusions. (110)

That the god is cloaked implies that the firm's opacity is essential to its power:

A giant was of an impulsive morality—one knew that much. He would pay for Mrs. Munt's hearthrug with ostentatious haste, a

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large claim he would repudiate quietly, and fight court by court. But his true fighting weight, his antecedents, his amours with other members of the commercial Pantheon—all these were as uncertain to ordinary mortals as were the escapades of Zeus. While the gods are powerful, we learn little about them. It is only in the days of their decadence that a strong light beats into heaven.

The narrator feigns an ordinary mortal's ignorance of the Porphyrion's nature, but the ironic insinuation that "impulsive morality" really means consistent self-interestedness betrays a more penetrating view of the correlation between institutional inscrutability and power. When he is out of work, Leonard sees Henry as a version of the giant: "Mr. Wilcox was king of this world, the superman, with his own morality, whose head remained in the clouds" (189). Whereas from the panoptical institutional position Henry occupies, he can see—or, again, elect not to see—Leonard, the institution seriously impedes Leonard's ability to return the gaze.

Given the forces arrayed to keep Leonard and his likes at a distance from knowledge, his grasp on how his experiences might express a social logic appears all the more remarkable. Even as he optimistically expends large effort and his scant resources to make it to the afternoon concert where he meets the Schlegels, he is all the time signaling his awareness that to learn the social dialect of his new friends "would take one years," if it were possible at all. He asks himself: "With an hour at lunch and a few shattered hours in the evening, how was it possible to catch up with leisured women, who had been reading steadily from childhood?" (32). Leonard's Bourdieuian perspective on his problems illustrates his own acuity and also undercuts the ability of the cultured and well educated to congratulate themselves on being the way they are. He sees what are often taken to be ineffable talents as, instead, early-acquired skills, and, in generalizing beyond his own case, he also clarifies the scope of the problem, suggesting that even if he can succeed as a special case, by being taken up as the Schlegels' protégé, there would remain an entire class of others who desire yet never have such an opportunity. By thus making clear the odds against Leonard, Forster opens the way for his least accomplishment to appear nearly heroic.

The narrator elaborates on Leonard's analysis: "His brain might be full of names, he might have even heard of Monet and Debussy; the trouble

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was that he could not string them together into a sentence, he could not make them 'tell'" (32). And it is here he introduces the important motif—
"he could not quite forget about his stolen umbrella":

Yes, the umbrella was the real trouble. Behind Monet and Debussy the umbrella persisted, with the steady beat of a drum. "I suppose my umbrella will be all right," he was thinking. "I don't really mind about it. I will think about music instead. I suppose my umbrella will be all right."

The contrast between Leonard's captivity to necessity and the Schlegels' freedom is then cruelly underscored when, having followed Margaret back to Wickham Place, Leonard finds that the sisters are so flush with umbrellas that Helen has no idea which one of them does not belong there.

Leonard plods on through the story, faced at every turn with the choice between culture and food, reading and sleeping, spending the time or spending the money:

Earlier in the afternoon, he had worried about seats. Ought he to have paid as much as two shillings? Earlier still he had wondered, "Shall I try to do without a programme?" There had always been something to worry him ever since he could remember, always something that distracted him in the pursuit of beauty. (32)

After the concert Leonard opts to walk a mile instead of spending a penny on the tram, and when he passes through an "immense tunnel" under the train line, a "sharp pain that darted through his head until he was conscious of the exact form of his eye sockets" (38) vividly figures the grind of his routine and his acute consciousness of himself as a body—subject not only to vital necessities but also to the side effects (the "roar of the trains") of machinery built to serve people other than the likes of him. And his odyssey is not over. He passes an acquaintance and is forced to feign familiarity with a news item to hide the fact he has not bought a Sunday paper. When finally he reaches his cellar apartment, he feigns cheerfulness for the sake of Jacky until he realizes that he is alone and can relax with his volume of Ruskin. Leonard's drudgery vividly dramatizes the significance of Margaret's insistence that the problem of social inequity is not a matter of singular instances of hardship to be answered by isolated acts of charity, but a matter of a daily grind.

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Again, the novel does not assert the impossibility, on an individual basis, of escape from conditions such as Leonard's, for of course there is always good luck. And the vast differences between characters of the same class, such as Leonard and his relatives, hint that there is room for self-invention. Neither does the novel posit aesthetic taste as a matter of transhistorical value or make it seem impossible that Leonard, as he is, could have something to offer as an aspiring writer. Said to be trying to "form his style on Ruskin" (40), Leonard translates in a way that seems a quasi-modernist improvement on some lines of Ruskin's that many would now look on as stilted. After a first draft in which he mechanically replaces the words with personally applicable synonyms—"Let us consider a little each of these characters in succession, and first (for of the absence of ventilation enough has been said already), what is very peculiar to this flat—its obscurity"—Leonard is said to realize that "the modifications would not do" and settles on the austere "My flat is dark as well as stuffy" (40).

A conspicuous similarity—a kind of stripping away to a lean, simple style—between Leonard's writing here and the clearly appealing way in which he describes the dawn after his night walk through the woods suggests that Forster favors the style Leonard achieves. In the earlier scene, after he has finished his night-walk story and Helen has asked, "But was the dawn wonderful?" the narrator says:

With unforgettable sincerity he replied, "No." The word flew again like a pebble from the sling. Down toppled all that had seemed ignoble or literary in his talk, down toppled tiresome R. L. S. and the "love of the earth" and his silk top-hat. In the presence of these women Leonard had arrived, and he spoke with a flow, an exultation, that he had seldom known. "The dawn was only grey, it was nothing to mention." (95)

Meanwhile, Ruskin's style is made to seem out of touch, a smug

voice in the gondola roll[ing] on, piping melodiously of Effort and Self-Sacrifice, full of high purpose, full of beauty, full even of sympathy and the love of men, yet somehow eluding all that was actual and insistent in Leonard's life. For it was the voice of one who had never been dirty or hungry, and had not guessed successfully what dirt and hunger are. (40)

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Thus, while it is fair to point out the narrator's unflattering descriptions of Leonard, the novel does not deny him the potential to "one day push his head out of the grey waters and see the universe" (40).

The sum of these elements is a far more complex Leonard than is typically recognized. Anne Wright is one of the few critics to note the "active sympathy with which the novel has engaged in the details of his life" (57) and to suggest that "whether or not Forster saw Leonard as peripheral, the text moves him closer and closer to the centre" (57–58). His final few speeches are fluent accounts of unequal opportunity and wasted potential: "I don't trouble after books as I used. I can imagine that with regular work we should settle down again. It stops one thinking. . . . Oh I did talk a lot of nonsense once, but there's nothing like a bailiff in the house to drive it out of you" (188). Thus Leonard is not only drawn as worthy of better, but also given to articulate a clear-sighted awareness of the forces that prevent him from having it, an awareness of his experience as it fits into a larger socioeconomic logic.

The Mr. Basts of the future

Although, as Helen implies, Henry introduces the idea of future Mr. Basts as a way to brush off her criticisms, to defer hard questions into an ever-receding future, he ends up raising an issue key to the novel's critique of laissez-faire approaches to social questions. While Henry claims that so-cioeconomic outcomes should be left to market forces that are themselves "let be," the representation of Leonard's experiences prompts the reader to feel otherwise. For the story of Leonard is not a story of the "destruction wrought by Margaret's well-intentioned efforts at mediation," as Paul Armstrong has suggested (322). Leonard's dilemma does not stem from the Schlegels' intervention. It stems from his having no prospects and, accordingly, having to entrust his future either to chance or to the personal goodwill of those with more power.

In focusing on the conflict between a global businessman and a member of the emerging "unskilled" white-collar class, Forster anticipates a model of relations that would become increasingly significant in the age Bauman calls liquid. While Leonard wants the attention of Henry—wants, that is, economic security, in order *not* to have to think of money and so be free to think about more interesting things—Henry accurately senses that such relationships represent a burden, a potential drag on his own

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economic freedom. So it is wisest for him to respect Leonard's difference and his privacy, to leave the clerk to his own devices. It is significant in this light that Forster portrays Leonard's own efforts to guard his privacy as motivated not by a sense of dignity but by a sense of shame about the real conditions of his life. As G. L. Anderson notes, by the early twentieth century, clerks had fallen on hard times, though this was not widely known either by the public or by the various London aid societies, being "deliberately concealed . . . from a society in which there was little sympathy for those unable to maintain their social position and economic independence and much stigma attached to poverty" (120). While affirming the clerk's reasons for denying his proximity to the "abyss" in an environment where personal appearance can serve as a form of symbolic capital, Forster emphasizes the drawbacks of this denial, foremost of which is its part in enabling a culture of negative recognition.

If Howards End does not deny that someone in Leonard's situation may enjoy a rich inner life despite his material constraints, neither does it ignore that doing so is a world easier when one is not subject to such constraints. Margaret's comment that the "poor cannot always reach those whom they want to love, and they can hardly ever escape from those whom they love no longer" (49) points toward the relentless truth that material limitations can, by delimiting experience and mobility, constrain one's inner life. Such statements can irritate, in that they raise problems that cannot be solved without a cost; hence the fervency of Henry's efforts to quell them. Although in some sense Henry succeeds, given that Margaret appears to turn on Leonard by the end of the novel, this success has been misunderstood by critics who claim that it betrays Forster's own views or the novel's hyprocrisy. Indeed, the neatness of novel's endingthe offing of Leonard as deus ex machina—is usually imputed to Forster's unwillingness or inability ultimately to deal with the critique he has set in motion.

Instead, we can read the ending as the novel's final provocation. After Leonard has been killed by the concerted forces of Wilcoxism, culture, and deprivation (that is, Charles Wilcox wielding a sword, an old bookcase, and poor health), the newly married Margaret Wilcox tries to rationalize his death by reverting to the language of the special case. When Helen threatens to spoil this sense of complacency by voicing discomfort with the difference between Leonard's fate and their own, Margaret first dismisses her concern, referring mystically to "eternal differences,"

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planted by God in a single family, so that there may always be colour: sorrow perhaps, but colour in the daily grey," and then counsels Helen to "forget him" (267). Although this moment is often read as Margaret's reckoning with her error in seeking to forge connections-reckoning, as Armstrong puts it, with the reality that the true "social bond in such a world is not solidarity or synthesis but the reciprocity of mutual respect for differences" (323)—her particular way of expressing herself should put the reader on alert. For in her enlisting of difference to rationalize what has been depicted throughout the novel as the fruit of injustice, Margaret sounds like no one so much as her new husband. Her conclusion that Leonard's "adventure," while perhaps not good enough for the sisters, was good enough for Leonard, echoes similar assurances made by Henry throughout the novel. And because all along the novel has demonstrated that we should regard distributive justice not as opposed to, but rather as an essential part of, recognition, Margaret's ultimate view that one has to choose—either "colour in the daily grey" or an adventure for Leonard as good as the one enjoyed by the Schlegels-remains unconvincing.

In his nonfictional writings, Forster often expressed his view that there is something blunt and disrespectful in relating individuals to their roles in larger systems. At the same time, he was aware of the conservative uses of not contemplating the lives of others, of overparticularizing, of refusing to compare lots and reckon with the connections between them. Howards End illuminates such connections, both emotional and economic, in order to rebut snapshot distortions that depict one's fate as inscrutable and unpredictable, an expression of chance and "character." Up against this rich texture, it is Margaret's "Not for us, but for him" that strikes one as flat and unsympathetic, expressing a complacency that the novel as a whole challenges, a complacency with a hierarchy of human value whereby only those at the bottom must pay the price for a diversity of human experience.

Howards End helps us to see that advocacy for redistribution does not preclude advocacy for recognition, that minimizing certain kinds of difference does not entail derogating the notion of difference itself. It suggests that the form of recognition that is "leaving things unknown" is not always salutary, to the extent that it can authorize a disregard for both recognition and redistribution by rendering all kinds of oppression invisible. And finally, Howards End asks us to pay attention to the values and prejudices that underlie our reactions to portrayals of social failure.

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Specifically, it asks us to use these reactions, our sense that portrayals of failure are necessarily degrading to those who fail, in order to question whatever we happen to take for granted as inherently valuable—whether graceful manners or Culture itself. In this, the novel offers itself as a model of sorts for developing new, more subtle theories of class, theories that themselves (as Dimock and Gilmore's book suggests) promise to be increasingly intertwined with questions of narrative.

Notes

- 1. Among the papers on offer at the 2004, 2005, and 2007 Modernist Studies Association conferences, for example, five focused on Forster's experiences in Egypt or India, and three explored same-sex desire in *Maurice*.
- 2. See for example Elizabeth Langland, Lyn Pykett, and Henry S. Turner.
- 3. Rose notes that by around 1880, a new kind of character had emerged, the "thoughtful," self-educated worker. He does not, however, place Leonard Bast in this category but rather sees him as an example of the more typical lower-class figure, who might have "keen sensibilities, a depressing sense of degradation, and a feeling of shame," but whose thoughts on his situation "would scarce fail to partake of the poverty of his circumstances" (398).
- 4. Fraser distinguishes recognition claims in the realm of mainstream multiculturalism from those in the realm of deconstruction, the former focusing on "surface reallocations of respect to existing identities of existing groups" and the latter on "deep restructuring of relations of recognition" (27). But the two groups join hands in their suspicion of "normative, programmatic, 'totalizing' thinking" (4) and their rejection of the idea that the primary form of domination is economic (17).
- 5. As Pierre Bourdieu's work shows, such critique also has the advantage of disrupting the relentless cycle whereby resources underwrite merit, which, as long as it can be interpreted as desert, draws yet more resources.
- 6. Levenson's reference is to Forster's 1938 essay "What I Believe."
- 7. On these points see also Amanda Anderson and S. P. Mohanty.
- 8. In addition to Pykett and Turner, see Daniel Born and David Medalie (especially page 179).
- 9. He writes:

When an Englishman has been led into a course of wrong action, he has nearly always begun by muddling himself. A public-school educa-

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tion does not make for mental clearness, and he possesses to a very high degree the power of confusing his own mind. ("Notes" 11)

- 10. That economic failure is the result of natural inequality is, in fact, the view of Peter Bauer, whom Amartya Sen has called the most influential of contemporary conservative development economists. Hobson, in 1909, identified the view as a "widely prevalent fallacy to which the personal vanity of lucky or successful men gives vogue" and "one of the new tactics of defence adopted by the possessing classes" ("Higher Tactics" 184).
- 11. Carey writes: "We saw that E. M. Forster's Leonard Bast eats tinned food, a practice that is meant to tell us something significant about Leonard, and not to his advantage" (21).
- 12. Other examples of this argument include that of Pat C. Hoy, for whom Leonard's fate illustrates the "tragic failure of well-intentioned intellectual schemes" (222), and that of Douglass Thomson, who claims that Margaret's interference with Leonard sets off a kind of chain reaction, serving as a "catalyst" to Helen's interference and thus to the tragedy (133n7).
- 13. The narrator is careful to absolve Leonard of naive belief in

that "bit of luck" by which all successes and failures are explained. "If only I had a bit of luck, the whole thing would come straight. . . . He's got a most magnificent place down at Streatham and a 20 h.-p. Fiat, but then, mind you, he's had luck." . . . Leonard was superior to these people. (40)

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Forster and the Fantastic:

The Covert Politics of The Celestial Omnibus

Ambreen Hai

each human mind has two personalities, one on the surface, one deeper down. The upper personality has a name. . . . It is conscious and alert, it does things like dining out, answering letters, etc. . . . The lower personality is a very queer affair. In many ways it is a perfect fool, but without it there is no literature, because unless a man dips a bucket down into it occasionally he cannot produce first-class work.

-Forster (Two Cheers 83; my emphasis)

In 1911 E. M. Forster published a collection of six short stories titled The Celestial Omnibus. Written between 1902 and 1910, all of the stories had been published before, mostly in The Independent Review (1903-07).1 Founded by the Cambridge Apostles, a debating society and intellectual "brotherhood" that included Lytton Strachey, Leonard Woolf, Roger Fry, and Forster himself, the Review "provided one of the most progressive perspectives on Edwardian culture" (Bristow, "Fratrum Societati" 115).2 Forster's own assessment of these stories is surprisingly high, placing them even higher than the four acclaimed novels he had published by then.3 "I think them better than my long books," he told Edward Garnett (12 November 1910; Letters 117); "I would rather people praised them than anything else I wrote," he told his friend Josie Darling (24 September 1911; Letters 125). Yet scholars have not shared Forster's view. Even the original Abinger series, the standard scholarly edition of Forster's work edited by Oliver Stallybrass (1972-83), which included his major finished and unfinished novels, manuscripts of novels, and The Life to Come

(Forster's posthumously published short stories with explicit homosexual content), did not include *The Celestial Omnibus*. Perhaps this is because these stories appear so whimsical, slight, or nonserious, eschewing realism, drawing instead on the genre of the fantastic. But this deceptive form, as I will argue here, is precisely what encodes a covert politics, allowing Forster to publish material that addresses homosexual desire and to link it with interlocking forms of societal oppression such as of race, class, and gender.

In the first book-length scholarly study of Forster's work, Lionel Trilling in 1943 paved the way for a dismissive reading of these stories as at best precursors to the novels: "The Greek myths made too deep an impression on Forster" (38). Of the 12 stories in The Collected Tales, the only two that Trilling saw as successful were the ones he dubbed "non-fantastic" ("The Road from Colonus" and "The Eternal Moment") because "they contain in embryo the themes, symbols and ideas of Forster's five novels." Hence, even in 1983 Christopher Gillie could declare that "unlike the stories of some of his distinguished contemporaries—Lawrence, Joyce, James, Conrad, Wells-Forster's do not contain some of his best work" (40), and that his novels worked because he had "by now subdued his tendency to fantasy" (44; my emphasis). This deprecating tone suggests that such critical judgments recognized—and deplored—the homoerotic undertones of these fantasies.⁵ After Forster's death (1970), his posthumously published gay writings initially occasioned hostility from critics both homophobic and homophilic,6 but subsequent revaluations, as in Robert K. Martin and George Piggford's excellent anthology Queer Forster, have crafted ways of reading that recuperate Forster's necessarily covert means of incorporating same-sex desire into seemingly heterosexual fictions and of reading the explicit posthumously published fiction like Maurice or The Life to Come as well. But there is still not much attention paid to his early short stories in the context of a queer or liberatory politics, or to their use of the fantastic as a form of code. Even the essays in Queer Forster do not address this early collection as a whole, and only briefly discuss two of the stories.7

Forster's effort to gather and republish these stories in 1911 was itself a telling act. At this moment, when Forster had achieved a reputation as the author of four novels, his novel-publishing career hit a seemingly inexplicable block. In 1911 he also began a novel, *Arctic Summer*, that remained unfinished, and he wrote two plays that were neither published nor performed.⁸

In 1912 he traveled to India, and upon his return in 1913 began A Passage to India. But by 1914, having drafted eight chapters, he was at a standstill again. In a burst of energy he wrote Maurice, but as Furbank reports, he found with "dismay [that] . . . to have written an unpublishable novel . . . was no help at all towards producing a publishable one" (Life 1: 259). Efforts to continue Passage resulted in despair. In 1919 he wrote to Siegfried Sassoon: "Abysmal depression all today. . . . While trying to write my novel, I wanted to scream aloud like a maniac" (Letters 302). He was not able to resume Passage until after his return from his second trip to India (1921–22), and it was only after tortured efforts and much encouragement from friends that he completed and published it in 1924.

Between 1911 and 1924 Forster published no fiction at all. As if redirecting his energies away from fiction, he published copious nonfiction: reviews, commentaries, essays, and two travel books or essay collections, *Pharos and Pharillon*, and *A Guide to Alexandria*. But the fiction he wrote would either be abandoned, or if completed, remain unpublished—completed, perhaps, precisely because it could not be published and did not have to be disguised.

Taking clues provided by Forster himself, biographers have cited as reasons for his apparent paralysis the unexpected success of Howards End (1910); his difficulties with his mother, with whom he continued to live (Furbank, Life 1: 197); his own "idleness, sexual frustration and sense of ineffectiveness" (1: 255); and increasing dissatisfaction with the limiting form of the heterosexual bourgeois romance (2: 132). But as his letters and diary entries from 1910 onward show, Forster himself understood perfectly that it was less sexual frustration than the inability to write publishable fiction about sexual frustration, or about the forms of sexuality that preoccupied him, that produced this crisis. Jesse Matz, in his percipient reading of Forster's unpublished memoir about the death of his Egyptian lover Mohammed-el-Adl (begun 1922), speculates that Forster's "melancholic realism" and effort to write truthfully about his ambivalent feelings led to his rejection of fiction (and romantic fictions) and to his writing no more novels (304). But the trouble with this reasoning is that it does not fit chronology: Forster's problems with writing publishable fiction began long before he met Mohammed.

In a diary entry of June 1911 Forster identifies three causes:

1. Inattention to health – curable. 2. Weariness of the only subject that both I can and may treat – the love of men for women

and vice versa. Passion and money are the only two main springs of action (not of existence) and I can only write of the first and of that imperfectly. . . . 3. Depressing & enervating surroundings. (qtd. by Furbank, *Life* 1: 199)

Indeed, Forster found it difficult to share even with good friends the reasons for his crisis, as he said in a letter to the writer Forrest Reid:

You ask about my work.... I am dried up. Not in my emotions but in their expression. I cannot write at all.... have a shot at helping me for I need it. Please do not mention this, as few people know. It often makes me very unhappy.

(2 February 1913, Letters 187)

A month later, in another letter to Reid, he wrote:

As for school stories, I might write them if I could write freely, but this is impossible in the Public's present state, and it bores me to write insincerely. It's all right touching off girls and boys in a short story, with fantasy instead of psychology to float them.

(23 March 1913, Letters 200)

This inability to "write freely" and hence sincerely clearly lay at the heart of the crisis. In fact, Forster wrote several overtly erotic short stories about homosexual desire that he either burnt or kept unpublished (some published posthumously in the collection The Life to Come).9 In "the Public's present state," shadowed by Oscar Wilde's notorious 1895 trials and subject to laws that criminalized male homosexuality, it seemed impossible to write publishable fiction that addressed it explicitly. 10 He wrote Maurice believing that he could never publish it. And after eight years of struggle, he completed Passage precisely by suppressing its homoeroticism. (Though the homoeroticism is undoubtedly central, as countless scholars have now recognized,11 making it invisible was so painful that this may well be why Forster stopped writing novels that he felt he could publish.) Yet it is precisely the "fantasy," or what I call the fantastic in the short-story form, mentioned so self-deprecatingly in his March 23 letter to Reid, that Forster commemorated in the collection he published as The Celestial Omnibus in 1911. Whereas the realist novel demanded a verisimilitude of "psychology," the fantastic short-story form seemed to allow for something else: sincerity within the constraints he lived under.

Why would Forster turn at this moment of crisis to the collection and republication of stories written earlier? Can the collection be read as an effort to regather strength, and hence to address the cultural issues that produced his crisis? Many of the stories are already concerned with the question of censorship, with how literature (or poetry or song) can have social effects, how it can speak of alternate or forbidden realities or of the unspeakable body and bodily desire. These were issues that Forster struggled with from the beginning of his career, though they came to a head in 1911. The republication is an attempt by Forster to seek inspiration in his own past work and suggests his longing for a covert form that could speak of homosexuality publicly yet implicitly. Hence it alerts us to the stories' significance and complexity, as early efforts to address the issues that eventually produced the crisis. It thus also directs us to read these stories for their encoded politics, indeed for their thematization of the difficulties of speaking under the cultural and legal constraints placed on literature in prewar Britain.

These deceptively simple, highly crafted, and profoundly suggestive tales carry hidden possibilities that both deserve attention in their own right and help us recast our understanding of Forster's longer fiction. The fantastic allowed for the coded insertion into public discourse of something alternative and proscribed. It did not ultimately help resolve the writing block, for as we will see, Forster found himself unable to conjoin the mode of the fantastic to that of the realist novel. 12 But in the fantastic short-story form he found an openness, a freedom from the constraints of characterization, an ability to queer norms of both genre and sexual desire. Arguing that Forster's short stories are in fact essays, or explorations of ideas in a form without "constraining marriage conventions," Judith Herz writes, "The short story in England was then so new, so potentially malleable, that Forster could shape it to his purposes with much greater ease than he could the novel" (8). However, I would contend that Forster's "purposes" in the fantastic short-story form were more directly political than Herz suggests. In a tantalizing comment in his 1925 essay "Anonymity," Forster indicates his awareness that the subterranean fount of his creativity was something subconscious and "lower," not "upper," something bodily and "queer" (epigraph). In other words, what underlies Forster's fiction, and specifically his use of the fantastic, is the element of the unsaid and proscribed, which is both necessary and destabilizing of the normative. The OED records the homosexual overtones of the term

queer as arising much later, but as Bristow notes, among select "groups of men—such as Henry James and E. M. Forster" the term carried a "homophile inflection" (Effeminate England 3) from the 1890s on. In Maurice, for instance, the term is associated both with homosexuality (91) and a certain (male Oxbridge) questioning of bourgeois norms (175), and extends to Risley's subversiveness in telling Maurice how much he enjoys watching "respectable London flock" unknowingly to hear Tchaikovsky's masterpiece dedicated to the nephew with whom he had "fallen in love" (162).

Republished in 1911 in part to appease his public and to appear productive, these self-nominated fantasies allowed Forster to experiment with a new form and politics. ¹³ If we take Annamarie Jagose's recent account of the queer as "always inflected by a sense of potentiality that it cannot yet articulate" (2), we can see Forster's fantasies as precisely queer in this sense. Adumbrating possibilities that remain unspecified yet eerily, mysteriously querying of sexual, gender, class, or racial norms, speaking the unspeakable body, they represent what Jagose calls "gestures or analytical models which dramatize incoherencies in the allegedly stable relations between chromosomal sex, gender and sexual desire" (3).

Hence Forster's "fantasy" should be understood not in the pejorative everyday sense as an unreal illusion or escape, ¹⁴ or as a wallowing in unfulfilled desire, but rather as linked both to the musical fantasia, a form of improvisation with a structure of its own, and to the fantastic, as something seemingly impossible, created by the imagination, for a deliberate purpose. Critics who dismiss Forster's fantasies as mere wish fulfilment or as a retreat into unreality ¹⁵ fail to account for the sexual-political potential of the fantastic, which serves as a coded but transgressive form of lawbreaking, a radical attempt to speak the unspeakable with impunity. Even though the fantastic was not a mode he could sustain, until 1911 it served as a form through which Forster could stage the otherwise unspeakable, presenting readers with possibilities that took them out of the realm of the conventional without having to name what those possibilities might be. ¹⁶

According to Tzvetan Todorov's well-known definition, the fantastic is a liminal genre, creating an area of undecidability between the uncanny and the marvelous; refusing explanation in terms of either the natural or the supernatural, it resists the satisfaction of one world over the other. Whereas the mystery is finally resolved in the uncanny text through the

rational, everyday laws of nature, and in the marvelous by explicit entry into a world of magic, the fantastic declines a definitive explanation, leaving the reader suspended in uncertainty (25), hesitating "between a natural and supernatural explanation of the events described" (33). Forster's use of the fantastic leaves his reader (and often the narrator, a reader internal to the text) hesitating between the dominant world of heteronormativity and the unspeakable underworld of proscribed desire. By not specifying that underworld, Forster is still able to delineate it, limn it in shadow form, as glimmering on its horizons. In late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literature, Todorov concludes, the fantastic was especially useful because it enabled the crossing of "certain frontiers that are [otherwise] inaccessible," such as addressing the "themes of ... incest, homosexuality, ... necrophilia, etc." (158). Hence its "function" was "to exempt the text from the action of the law, and thereby to transgress that law" (159). This capacity for covert transgression of laws of censorship enabled Forster to represent forbidden desire and fulfillment without committing himself to anything explicitly, and without being subject to legal reprisal. Through the whimsical form of the fantasy tale, Forster sought a way out of the constraints of realism, offering oblique glimpses of otherness, or spaces of existence that he could not attempt in his novels.

As I will show, Forster's fantastic produces three structural or thematic features key to the six stories. First, a crucial moment of epiphany for the central protagonist (who is at odds with bourgeois Englishness) occurs outdoors, an open space opposed to the cloistered interiors that represent social convention and containment. This outdoor space is rendered as a part of a giant body, a hollow in a mountain, an emanation of something titanic or preternatural that produces a touch—either through storm, water, tree, rock, or faun—that recharges the human body and spirit, rekindling the forces of creativity. In "Other Kingdom," for instance, this almost sinister, gargantuan body threatens to invade the domestic interior to which the young woman's tormentors have retreated: "Ladies screamed, and we saw Other Kingdom as one who clasps the hands, and heard it as one who roars with laughter in the thunder" (66). The touch of this giant hand, in the form of a branch that shatters a window, enables the protagonist to escape. The landscape as giant body that intrudes on the bourgeois scene might then be read as a resurfacing of the body released from artificial constraints. Thus Forster attempts, in his shorter fiction, to

make tangible the invisible, repressed connections between the body and the forces that surround it, that need to be tapped for body and soul to reach their potential.

Second, the narrative is presented by an obtuse or unreliable narrator who remains a peripheral observer ("Other Kingdom" and "Panic") or a grudging convert ("The Other Side of the Hedge" and "The Curate's Friend"). This narrator's conventional language serves to expose the limits of such convention and to convey, by indirection, alternate realities outside them. The narrator of "Other Kingdom" actively suppresses what he knows, leaving gaps in his narrative. Reading these tales then requires the effort of both decoding and reading between the lines, against the grain of the narrator's intent or deliberate distortions, in the tension between Forster's clues and the narrator's suppressions. The truth is conveyed as unspeakable, because to convey it anything but obliquely would undo the point.

And third, while these stories offer a critique of homophobic oppression, they are also more broadly concerned with linking it to oppression based on race ("Other Kingdom"), class ("Panic"), gender ("Other Kingdom"), or age ("Road to Colonus"). The Independent Review, in which most of these stories were originally published, and to which Forster dedicated The Celestial Omnibus in 1911, was committed from its founding to a range of liberal political causes, both domestic and imperial, which included women's rights, labor unions and worker's rights, the reduction of landed wealth, home rule for Ireland, and "sanity in imperialism and foreign affairs" (Furbank, Life 1: 107–09).¹⁷

While scholars like Judith Herz and James Miracky have recognized that Forster's novels use fantasy to encode homosexuality, they have not drawn on Todorov to explain fantasy as a mode of transgression, nor do they read Forster's writing of the fantastic as a form of political action. The crucial question that remains unanswered in their work is: what is the *purpose* of this double encoding? Is it merely to express Forster's own desires, as they suggest? Or does it seek further both to speak to readers in the know, and to unsettle the assumptions of those *not* in the know? Though Herz notes the "double nature" of Forster's fiction (18), for her the homoerotic quality of Forster's work is not central, and his "doubleness," ultimately, is one of voice, which creates a tension between the narrator and the "meaning" (49). Regarding Forster's fantasy as "an intensely personal re-creation of mythic stories" (25), Herz examines his use of Greek deities like Demeter, Pan, and Hermes to address issues such

as "the power of the imagination" (34) or "the subject of poetry" (50).19

Miracky argues that Forster's novels "use fantasy elements to queer the literary form that is the repository of the Edwardian 'normal,' i.e. novelistic realism" (130). Ultimately these "elements" (Greek gods, delllike spaces, Rickie's writing of fantasy stories) are not, Miracky argues, a success in the novels (143-44), but he does not identify the fantastic as a form in itself, or address Forster's short stories at all. Indeed, in claiming that fantasy allowed Forster both to "express his struggles with same-sex desire" and "offer a subtle critique of the society which produces such a conflict" (130), he remains restricted to a biographical reading of fantasy as an unconscious mode that allowed Forster to express his "queer desires" (132, 141). In such a reading, "queer" becomes depoliticized, and fantasy is loosely understood both as an opposition to realism and as an inferior form of unfulfilled utopian longing (142).20 I argue, on the contrary, that in The Celestial Omnibus Forster uses the form of the fantastic to engage in a covert politics of same-sex desire as well as of class, race, gender, and nationhood because this form, as elaborated by Todorov, allowed for transgression without being liable for blame, and because it opened up possibilities that remained implicit but unsettling. Hence the fantastic for Forster was not simply a means of expressing personal unfulfilled longing but rather an effort to consider whether writing could be a form of political action.

One of the main reasons for Forster's crisis was his sense of ineffectuality as a writer: not only could he not write about alternative sexualities, but he also felt he could do nothing to effect change in the society that proscribed such writing. How could he speak the unspeakable body in a culture where homosexuality had become a criminal act?²¹ How could his fiction act politically to change a climate of prejudice and ignorance regarding not only sexuality but also sexism, imperialism, and classism? 1911 was a moment of national transition, given the death of Edward VII in 1910. It was also a time of explicit political resistance: the women's suffrage movement; tumultuous labor union strikes; the Parliament Bill, which limited the delaying power of the House of Lords; and Irish Home Rule (introduced in 1912 and passed 1914). How could Forster, now a well-known novelist, also engage in political resistance, yet for something he could not publicly speak about?

In 1912 Forster was reading the *Bhagavad-Gita*, as if thinking not only of his imminent trip to India but also of his crisis as comparable to that of Arjuna the warrior, conflicted before a battle that would decimate his

clan and transform his community.²² Forster's essay on the Gita, "Hymn before Action" (1912), offers a meditation on the relation between action and words. It is fascinated with Krishna's poetic adjuration to Arjuna to fight—the enabling myth that constitutes the Gita—to act without expectation of reward, to understand that even if action brought devastation it might still be morally necessary: "The saint may renounce action, but the soldier, the citizen, the practical man generally—they should renounce, not action, but its fruits" (Abinger Harvest 345). Yet what may have interested Forster even more is its implication that words are crucial to impelling action, and may in themselves be a form of action. The stories in The Celestial Omnibus represent the struggle to achieve this kind of agency through words, to destabilize normative, hegemonic constructions of desire or social hierarchy. Each story addresses Forster's ongoing concern with speaking the repressed body and bodily desire, with finding artistic and emotional fulfillment, and connecting the politics of (homo)sexuality with other forms of social oppression or injustice. In his novels, as we will see, the fantastic coexisted uncomfortably with novelistic realism, narrative teleology, and psychological interiority. But in Forster's short stories it came into its own.

The celestial moment, or the epiphany of touch:

reading Forster's fantasies

When Forster had negotiated a contract for his collection, he wrote to Edward Garnett, "I have at last entrapped a publisher into taking them. I am very glad" (12 November 1910; Letters 117). Forster's self-deprecating humor implies that the fiction he is putting before the public is double-coded, that to entrap a publisher is also to spring hidden—and perhaps prohibited—meanings upon an unwary world.²³ It is telling that he refused to have these stories illustrated, as if to disallow the visual frame of another's interpretation from narrowing their hermeneutic possibility (Letters 115).²⁴ In 1947 he republished them yet again, together with six more previously published short stories, as The Collected Tales.²⁵ In his introduction to this volume he dedicates the stories "anew" to Hermes, messenger of the gods (The Machine Stops xvii), as if in hope that a proscribed communication, a secret message,

might succeed. Indeed, his identification of Hermes as also the "machine-breaker, and conductor of souls to a not-too-terrible hereafter," suggests that this figure at the "prow" of his book's ship might also help break certain cultural systems and carry souls somewhere hitherto unknown (xv). Many readers sensed the hidden undertow of this kind of fantasy and objected without making the basis of their objections clear. An early reviewer in the *Athenaeum*, for instance, wrote that the stories "all have a smack of the fantastically supernatural' that failed to convince" (qtd. in Lago 132.) Hertz reports that others found it a "baffling or unsettling aesthetic," but more knowing readers (like Forrest Reid) recognized their "implicit homoerotic quality" and "power" (25–26).²⁶

Not surprisingly, the plot of each story centers on the possibility of escape from suburban English conventions. All six stories present this escape as a transfiguring moment of conversion to an invisible realm that combines bodily with spiritual fulfillment and political or social action. Each story dramatizes some bodily desire or inexpressible yearning on the part of the figure who seeks escape, and centers upon a transfiguring, transformative moment of *epiphany* that is the result of some kind of physical "touch"—a key word in Forster's lexicon—by a force often envisaged as a superhuman giant or preternatural body. This epiphany may then lead to poetic liberty or inspiration as well as social intervention. Each story also employs a language of mystery to suggest what lies beyond the boundaries of conventional language and reality.

In "The Curate's Friend"27 Forster offers a delicately tongue-incheek account of self-realization following release from heteronormative marriage and society. The once obtuse curate-narrator describes himself as having been a self-righteous "fool," a priest who lectured on "the other world" to his parishioners without knowing anything about otherness, and gave "straight talks" to his lads that led "straight past anything awkward"—that is, anything sexual (The Machine Stops 68). One day, however, a hillside picnic with his fiancée and her family is interrupted by his sudden breakthrough into another world of subterranean existence, of "a multitude of voices," as if of invisible "guests at a party" (70-71). The Curate alone first hears a faint, painful cry, and then sees a large naked male body towering over his guests. Not yet seeing its horns and tail, he mistakes it for one of his "village lads," but then, on touching it, discovers it is a Faun who has come to make him "happy" (71). Trying to explain why, other than children, he was the only one able to see this creature. the Curate suggests his own affinity to the Faun's otherness:

How I came to see him is a more difficult question. For to see him there is required a certain quality, for which *truthfulness* is too cold a name and *animal spirits* too coarse a one, and he alone knows how this quality came to be in me. (68; my emphasis)

Invisible and inaudible to those clouded by convention, the Faun—a mysterious presence in the English countryside, and a materialization of that which exists beyond ordinary vision—represents both bodily and sexual truth, that is, not only the hidden world of homosexual society, but also the impulse of truth that ruptures convention to reveal suppressed desires. His magic touch exposes the Curate's fiancée's desire for another man, with whom she then departs, and triggers the Curate's realization of his own real desires. Perceiving the Faun and, like Caliban, hearing that the "place was full of noises" (70)—"the voices of the hill beneath me, of the trees above my head, of the very insects in the bark of the tree" (71)—the Curate experiences a magical sense both carnal and ephemeral, like Puck's in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, both animal and faery, that he cannot find words for in the English language.

This truth-inducing touch of the Faun, which constitutes both sexual invitation and spiritual conversion, forces the recalcitrant curate out of denial both of the self, and of what the self desires. His "sunlit" presence, which for the first time enables the curate to hear the poetry of the earth, "the singing" of the chalk downs (74), becomes the secret source of the curate's joy and creativity, of his efficacious capacity to preach better sermons and help his parishioners—though that success depends on his silence about its source. The transfiguring joy of the Faun's massively homoerotic presence is thus linked with the body, the earth, and England's pre-Christian, pagan history. Importantly, instead of escaping, the curate stays to help others, to use his secret power to affect (and infect) his unknowing society of parishioners through his writing and speeches. His work thus has political effects upon others, but only under conditions of secrecy, unable to change the conditions that impose silence upon the real source of his skills. Moreover, it registers the existence of those unheard voices, even if it does not presume to translate them. In this strangely selfexposing paradigm, Forster suggests that true creativity and agency come from bodily and spiritual consummation, but that such fulfillment must remain silent about itself in order to be effective.

Indeed, if, as Forster's joking signature "self and Faun" in a letter

suggests (*Letters* 246), the Faun is a dimension of Forster's own split self, the daemon perhaps of his own creativity, then the tale also articulates both Forster's sense of painful restriction and his artistic desire to produce material effects. The story ends with a destabilizing remark overturning the fiction that this is merely fiction, as if the voice of the narrator and of Forster himself suddenly become merged:

Therefore in the place of the lyrical and rhetorical treatment, so suitable to the subject, so congenial to my profession, I have been forced to use the unworthy medium of a narrative, and delude you by declaring that this is a short story, suitable for reading on the train. (74)

In "The Other Side of the Hedge" (1904), the hedge divides the visible everyday (a narrow, dusty road, framed on either side by a brown hedge, where an endless race is run toward an unknown goal) from the unseen (the other side of the hedge, which is green, peaceful, fertile). The conventional narrator, blindly following the dusty road, scorns his "brother" for "singing . . . and helping others" (39), though he is drawn to the "other side." "For we of the road do not admit in conversation that there is another side at all," he says, suggesting how dominant society is both aware of and censors alternatives (40). Once there, he is "touched" in two ways: he falls into a "deep pool" and then is "twitche[d]" out of that baptismal fluid by a Christ-like savior (41). Yet it is only in the final moment of transformation, when he imbibes an unknown drink, that he realizes that the green "other" side is the destination of his "race" (in both senses) and that he was saved by his lost "brother" (or friend, lover, alter ego) who combines artistry (song) with social agency (helping others) (48). Thus the story also suggests the possibility that Forster's own fiction (song) may speak of an invisible reality and have such social effects (helping others).

More of a cautionary tale about *not* following such a guiding touch, "The Road from Colonus" (1904) is perhaps the best known of this collection. This may be so because its uncanniness is the least susceptible to readings of homosexual desire (or perhaps it seems more real because the protagonist *fails* to escape), but it follows the pattern of the other stories—the desire to escape, the moment of epiphany, the concern with those of another class or race, and the combination of the unspeakable and the bodily as the trigger of release. An old man on holiday in Greece, tired of

his bullying daughter and English companions, is inexplicably riveted by a moment, touched by a place. Not apparently sexual, but unnameable, his desire is to resist the disempowerment of age or of mundane convention: "a strange desire had possessed [Mr. Lucas] to die fighting. . . . 'I will enter into it [Greece], I will possess it. Leaves shall be green again, water shall be sweet, the sky shall be blue," he thinks (76–77). And yet, the narrator adds, Mr. Lucas feels something else, something that remains unstated: "and he remembered, without smiling, another of his thoughts" (77).

It is this unspoken desire that the genius loci seems to fulfil, for the next moment Mr. Lucas steps into a mysterious stream welling from "the hollow roots and hidden crevices" of a tree and, the narrative repeats, suddenly the water is sweet, the leaves green, and the sky blue. In this inviting living hollow his epiphany is both bodily and spiritual: "something unimagined, indefinable, had passed over all things" (78). The imagery suggests that he is touched by a body of nature: the trunk is "living," the stream emanates from a "lip of bark" (77), as if he has been suffused by the liquidity coming from a giant mouth. Unexpectedly he is moved to a strange affinity and benediction, a "love" of a peasantry he had once scorned (79).29 The epiphany concludes with a conviction that he has been mysteriously empowered to "transfigure the face of the world" (82)—if he could stay there one night. But he is forced to follow his companions' inflexible plans, while the Greeks who resist the English tyranny are subjected to brute violence (83). Months later, living a cantankerous existence, he learns that on that crucial night a storm felled the tree and crushed all below. Although usually read as an account of failed opportunity (to die a tragic death), the story could instead represent the failure to fulfill one's potential (to enact social transformation). Like Oedipus at Colonus, as the title suggests, Mr. Lucas seeks refuge in this sacred spot, but unlike Oedipus, who resists being dragged back to Thebes, Mr.Lucas fails to resist his companions' philistinism, racism, and classism. Had he stayed, as Oedipus did, among the people who offered refuge, perhaps Mr. Lucas could have preserved their village from annihilation: he may have averted the storm, which destroyed the villagers because the repudiated spirit locale took revenge for Mr. Lucas's departure. In either case, the story presents the destructive effects of the failure to fulfill bodily and spiritual desire, as well as to build bonds across difference.

However, the two stories that speak most centrally to Forster's crisis are "The Story of a Panic" (1904) and "The Celestial Omnibus" (1908).

Because they articulate more deeply and at greater length Forster's efforts to move from fiction as an expression of desire to fiction as a form of political action, they call for more detailed readings.

"The Story of a Panic"

and "The Celestial Omnibus"

Placed first in the collection, "The Story of a Panic" was the first story that Forster ever published (he wrote it in 1902), and one to which he often returned. "I like it more than I ought to," he wrote to Robert Trevelyan (5 July 1904, Letters 60), though he claimed surprise when some readers recognized its homoeroticism. 30 It is a powerful yet oblique account of (homo)sexual revelation and release from English bourgeois conventions actuated by an English adolescent's encounter with an unseen but palpable Dionysian spirit, the god Pan. Narrated by a pompous Englishman who imposes his ideals of manhood and chivalry on the boy, it describes how this 14-year-old is the only one in a group of English tourists in Italy who is not overcome by a sudden panic that overtakes them all at a picnic. As Martin and Piggford remind us, this is a moment of "Pan-ic," etymologically the sudden fear inspired by Pan (4-5).31 The story leaves unsaid what actually happens—whether it is the god Pan or the "genius loci" (named as generating this story) who terrifies the disbelievers. (Pan is also recalled in "Other Kingdom" as, true to his name, found in "most places" [45]. And, of course, Pan is another version of the Faun, or Roman god Faunus, in "The Curate's Friend."32)

The narrator begins by suggesting that this story is out of his control, indeed that the event has had a bodily impact upon him, for he cannot weed out "irrelevant details" or "conversation" that are "imprinted on his brain" (2). He describes the "scenery," which is not just a setting but an agent, a huge body at the margins of his story that will violently disrupt his placid systems of order. Like the picnic turned panic later in A Passage to India—where the "touch" of "the flesh of the sun's flesh" (136) is felt in the Marabar Hills and has unspeakable effects on Adela and Mrs. Moore—this picnic occurs in a "vast hollow, shaped like a cup, into which radiated ravines from the precipitous hills around" (2). 33 Like the Marabar caves, this hollow space amidst mountains covered in bushy green trees not only suggests a sexual orifice but also is described as a threatening giant body: "a

many fingered green hand, palm upwards, . . . was clutching convulsively to keep us in its grasp." As if inverting the clutch of social conventions on the boy's spirit and body, this liberating force is now seen to threaten the imposers of conventions themselves.

As in Passage, where the Marabar hills and caves can only be described by negation, so here the arrival of the power is described only by its effects. As the English tourists languidly discuss the landscape and the curate loudly announces "Pan is dead," his words are followed by an unearthly silence. Then, as in "The Curate's Friend" and "Other Kingdom," nature begins to speak, as the narrator hears "two boughs of a great chestnut [tree] grinding together" (5) like two bodies, "as the tree swayed" under the influence of a great force; Eustace's "ear-splitting whistle" literalizes the bodily impact of this unseen presence. Soon the entire party is transfixed by the sight of a "catspaw of wind that was running down one of the ridges opposite, turning the light green to dark as it traveled"—as if they were mice paralyzed by a feline force. The resurgence of the animal in the human can only be indicated by its bodily effects: "I became terribly frightened, . . . frightened in a way I never have known either before or after; . . . in the eyes of the others too I saw blank expressionless fear, while their mouths strove in vain to speak and their hands to gesticulate" (5-6). As the tourists turn to flee, the narrator can only repeat "nothing," can only register the inadequacy of his language: "I saw nothing and heard nothing and felt nothing, since all the channels of sense and reason were blocked" (6). This narrator's name is finally disclosed to be Tytler (8)—suggesting a tatler or teller of tales who talks too much, seeks to titillate, though himself unable to access the truth.

Those who attempt to name "it" are cast as manifestly absurd. Resorting to the facile language of Christian self-righteousness, the curate diagnoses the event as a visitation of Satan (9). But if the narrator's language cannot convey what has happened to Eustace (who remains silent), clues are provided by the body, evidencing some kind of touch. The tourists find Eustace—the only one who remained unafraid—lying in the grass, "natural and undisturbed," his hand "convulsively entwined in the long grass" (7). He now has the power, however, to disturb others. To Tytler's "unspeakable horror," a lizard slithers out of Eustace's shirt-cuff: a suggestion of his new sexuality, his link with the serpentine, phallic, earthy, animal world (14). When his aunt "touche[s]" him he produces an enigmatically "disquieting smile." In "Other Kingdom," the disappearance of

Miss Beaumont—"who was beside us, above us; here was her footstep on the purple-brown earth—her bosom, her neck" (66)—suggests both her invisible presence, and her bodily impression, as an orgasmically suggestive footmark on the earth. Similarly in "Panic," Pan seems to mark his presence by his traces on the earth: Eustace rubs out some goatish footmarks beneath a tree by rolling on them "like a dog"—as if the very act of touching Pan's hoofmarks brings him pleasure.

Like the Faun in "The Curate's Friend," Pan may be a signal deity for Forster because he is a god not only of the body, of the Dionysiac spirit, but also of song. His invocation and appearance suggest both the inspiration of the creative urge and the fulfillment of Forster's aspiration to integrate the carnal into literature, and particularly to speak the unspeakable body. (In The Longest Journey, Rickie's book is titled Pan Pipes, brought out after his death by his "brother," as if embodying the fulfillment of his homoerotic and artistic desires in one.) Eustace's experience also has artistic and political consequences: the release of his creative energies and his shift to an egalitarian vision. Ecstatically he celebrates nature with a new bodily energy and sudden effusion of words: dancing around at night, he produces a paean—to Pan—a celebration of nature, body, and spirit. But as his epiphany activates his creative and artistic powers, Eustace also turns to embrace people he has not noticed before—an old peasant woman he passes on the way and a young Italian waiter, Gennaro. Most readers have recognized a homoerotic subtext in the interaction between Eustace and Gennaro, where Gennaro is the only one who understands Eustace's new condition and tries to help him escape his English companions, and it is not difficult to see this interaction in relation to Forster's other representations of homoerotic relations between men of different classes or races. Yet it seems insufficient to read "Panic" as a story of Gennaro and Eustace alone, which would require reading backward from the end and ignoring the substantial weight the story places on what happens before Gennaro appears.

Eustace first encounters Pan and then is recognized by Gennaro as having entered a new, good state: status bono or Eu-stace. Hence it would seem that the encounter produces in him not only a (homo)sexual awakening but a pan-urge to question social or political inequity, to abandon restrictions not only of sex but also of race, class, and gender. On his return from the picnic, though Tytler tries to cut Eustace's "intolerable promiscuous intimacy" and "intercourse with social inferiors," Eustace kisses

an old peasant woman he passes and gives her flowers before he arrives home and jumps into Gennaro's arms (11–12). He asks Gennaro to address him in the familiar tu form, much to Tytler's intense (and consciously racist) disapproval, espousing a new intimacy and equality, which Gennaro reciprocates (13–14). At the end, Gennaro dies because he betrays Eustace for money, but Eustace escapes into the unknown outdoors for good.

The greatest horror for Eustace is return to the constraints of Englishness. Opposing indoor and outdoor spaces, the story suggests that to force Eustace to stay indoors would ensure his death. "I nearly saw everything, and now I can see nothing at all," he weeps as he is manhandled by Tytler. The poignancy of a creature in pain is emphasized by nature weeping over him, shedding white rose petals as he is dragged back to the house, the artificial construct of society. "Not to my room,' he pleaded, 'it is so small,'" (19) as if the story also pleads for a more open space—which is why all of Forster's epiphanies take place in open spaces of nature. Forster's final comment on the deadening power of society and family is made through Gennaro, who urges Eustace's freedom: "I am alive now, . . . because I had neither parents nor relatives nor friends, so . . . I could . . . accomplish my desire!" (20).

In his crisis, Forster returned to "The Story of a Panic" and later rewrote it into A Passage to India. It powerfully rehearses the issues that preoccupied his career: the unspeakable body disrupting an oppressive and dominant social system; the desire to link sexual and other forms of oppression; and the need to resist that oppression through song. But it is "The Celestial Omnibus" that more overtly addresses these preoccupations and articulates a political vision. It suggests more directly how literature can act.

"The Celestial Omnibus" presents another escape of a boy from his middle-class, kind, but philistine parents and the fulfillment of his inchoate desires in an invisible other realm (a literary "heaven"). An allegory for the literary work, the "celestial omnibus" in which he is literally transported is a magical vehicle of bodily conveyance driven by writers like Thomas Browne, Jane Austen, and Dante. Invisible to most, it materializes for the boy when he disobeys his parents and follows a sign—"a joke of a person named Shelley" (29). The story clearly contrasts the boy's intuitive apprehension of "the spirit and truth" of poetry with his parents' notion of art as commodity or cultural capital, and with his instructor Mr. Bons's pedantic and exclusivist ideas of literature. Because the boy understands

books not as "bound" things of vellum, as dead skin, artificially divided into the great and the small, but as living bodies that speak, he can hear celestial music, see the rainbow bridge across chasms of darkness (42), and, conveyed by literary writers, cross into the heaven filled with literary characters, whereas Mr. Bon is rejected at the gates and plunges to his death in a precipice below.

Usually read as concerning the transfiguring power of art or its unhampered pleasures, the story also concerns proscribed sexuality, like literature the subject of misunderstanding and derision. The sign opposite his house that first evokes the boy's curiosity is itself the subject of censorship: his mother is reluctant to speak of it except to say that "the police ought to remove it." A hint of Wilde-like sexual scandal taints it: it was made by unnamed "naughty young men" who were "expelled from University" (29). Pointing up a blank alley, painted with the words "To Heaven," it playfully subverts linguistic and cultural codes, suggesting that what seems to be a dead end, a form of sterility (and perhaps homoerotic anality), is the way to salvation—the route that leads the inquisitive boy to the celestial omnibus.

The boy's own desires also conflate the sexual and the literary. They overtake him at the liminal moment of sunset, at the in-between time that constitutes the cusp of day and night, at the anatomically suggestive "cutting" that:

had first stirred desires within the boy—desires for something just a little different, he knew not what, desires that would return whenever things were sunlit, . . . running up and down inside him, . . . till he felt quite unusual all over, and as likely as not would want to cry. (30)

As this queer yearning leads him up the "blank alley," the tale suggests not that the artistic urge is a sublimation of the homoerotic but rather that bodily, emotional, and literary fulfillment exist on the same plane—indeed, as in my epigraph, that without the "queer" there is "no literature." The boy is taken on his first trip to "Heaven" by Thomas Browne, who combines the bodily and the poetic to describe the boy's malady as a "queasy soul" and himself as "a healer of the spirit" (35). The boy's final epiphany is achieved when he is welcomed by Achilles to stand on his shield, and a "touch of fresh [laurel] leaves" announces that "someone had crowned him" (43–44; my emphasis).

The name of this "journey's end" or "destination" (59) and the details of the boy's visit to this celestial space remain unsaid. The inexplicable death of Mr. Bons is reported in the newspaper, which does not (or cannot) mention the disappearance of the boy. He has escaped the newspaper's reality so utterly that even his disappearance cannot be noted. By contrast, Forster's story differentiates itself from such journalistic truth: it can suggest obliquely this alternative that lies outside convention. Furthermore, it thus articulates its own hopes and goals of political agency.

The boy's standing on Achilles' shield is analogous to Eustace's freedom from colonizing narrowness. But "The Celestial Omnibus" also offers hope that as literature it might achieve a "healing of souls" (58-59) even as it regrets that some readers willfully remain blind. The boy returns home hoping to save his parents, but they cannot see what he can, and as he prepares for his final departure, he weeps: "they will not come, though the road starts opposite our house" (38-39). The road is "opposite" their house in a double sense: (i) at odds, opposed to the conventional, leading away from the confining interior to the liberating unknown; and (ii) it is adjacent, proximate, not distant, but close, located intimately to the self. Like the boy's father who canes and punishes him for "untruthfulness" (37), in A Passage to India the Anglo-Indians are enemies of art, literature, and criticism. They are suspicious of thought, because reflection can bring (self)critique; the mind that thrives upon unthinking knows what to outlaw. The story thus both intimates and addresses the anxiety that haunts Forster's work—how, if literature is to be truly transformative, could it speak the unspeakable body and make the unseeing see.

But the stories in *The Celestial Omnibus* ultimately could not provide a lasting solution for Forster's crisis. For him, the fantastic was a mode that only worked for the suggestiveness and openness of the short story, not for the sustained weight of a long realist novel. In later writings Forster would give up this coded language, splitting his writing into (publishable) essays and (unpublishable) fiction.³⁵ As a coda, then, it is worth considering briefly the novel that Forster also began in 1911 but never completed, *Arctic Summer*, which illustrates by comparison how the fantasy that worked in the short story failed in the novel.

Coda: The failure of Arctic Summer and the possibility of magical realism

If a writer is courageous and sensitive he has . . . fulfilled his public calling.

-Forster (Abinger Harvest 70)

In 1911 Forster began writing a novel, Arctic Summer, in which he tried to address the issues that had produced his crisis. The novel was never completed. Explicitly concerned with masculinity and heroism, with the dilemma of appropriate action in the modern world for a man of reflection, Arctic Summer also implicitly questions how it, as a work of reflection, can act. It sets up an opposition between the man of reflection (the cultured, refined, but unheroic Martin Whitby) and the man of action (the athletic but raw and unsocialized Clesant March). Clesant, slow to think, instinctively but uncaringly yanks Martin from untimely death under a train, while Martin, slow to act, panics in a fire and, to his crippling shame, deserts his lame chauffeur inside a crowded theatre. But Clesant's rigid morality, his homophobic condemnation of his brother Lance, leads to Lance's suicide. This is contrasted with Martin's sensitive desire to help others, to effect social change by increasing the accessibility of art. While Clesant's aspirations for heroism are rooted in obsolete notions of gender and chivalry, Martin's ambition is to bring about an "Arctic Summer," a "time to get something really important done": in his case, to connect politics and literature by persuading the state to allocate half a million as a "Subsidy for Literature and Art" (125-26).36

In fact, the novel is concerned mostly with Martin and the problem of heroic action in social and political contexts where issues are not resolvable by a simple "fight." How could one be both reflective and have material effects, both poetic and politically effectual? "No morality can be good when it despises thought," Martin tells a gathering of school boys (205), as if speaking for Forster's own battle against the boyhood inculcation of unthinking nationalism. Yet as Forster seems soon to have realized, by opposing "battle" and "work," the novel disallowed the resolution of battle as work. Seeking to unite effective action and artistic sensitivity, manly interventionism and mature reflection, courageous will and nu-

anced political awareness, it could not yet see how the man of thought could also become the man of action, how "work" could itself be a form of "battle."

Elizabeth Heine suggests that one reason Forster could not continue this novel was his inability to write about homosexuality in a publishable form (xxii). She cites a diary entry of 19 December 1910, where Forster records his "desire for a book" that would include no "orthodox love-making" (for he is tired of dissimulation), "and perhaps not even the unorthodox" (xiv). And indeed the novel is occupied both with the fascination of the married Martin for Clesant and the homoerotic presence of Clesant's brother Lance: Lance first appears, like the Faun in "The Curate's Friend," joyously, mischievously naked, to greet his brother at the door of their shared bathroom (164); Clesant refuses to allow Lance to divulge his unspecified but "indecent" desires (180); and finally, Lance is expelled from college in disgrace for an act that remains unnamed (188–92).

But unlike the short story, the novel form sat uneasily with Forster's efforts to queer through the fantastic, to speak a liberatory politics of homosexuality. When Martin sees an Italian painting of Clesant's warrior ancestor, which celebrates the athletic, manly body, courage and commitment to a cause, and Clesant's lineage of militant heroism, he undergoes a magical transfiguring moment of epiphany. As if physically pierced by the sight, he "cries out" (147), and like the boy in "The Celestial Omnibus," is "strangely" "touched" (148) by something that remains nameless: "he saw neither the man nor the picture but a power behind both, to which he could give no name. That power had saved his life" (149). But although the novel tries to speak in a double voice, to suggest alternatives to conventional vision, the inclusion of the fantastic here strikes a discordant note. Unable to take this realist mode where his stories had ventured, Forster abandoned this novelistic effort, having failed to create a satisfying discourse that would conjoin the homoerotic body with the desire for social or political intervention.

This is not to say that the genres of the fantastic and realist fiction are inherently incompatible, for certainly by the end of the twentieth century, magical realism was to combine the two most potently to create a new form for world literature. So why did this not work for Forster? Or, given these early short stories, can we think of Forster as an early architect of magical realism? What did Forster intuit, in his efforts to combine fantasy and realism, and why was he unable to make good on the promise that

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later writers like Garcia Marquez, Salman Rushdie, and Toni Morrison would perfect? Scholars disagree on the formal degree to which the fantastic overlaps with magical realism, for although both combine worlds of magic and reality, the extent of what Todorov calls "hesitation" between the two varies. Disagreeing with Amaryll Chanady's claim that unlike the fantastic, magical realism resolves the hesitation between "conflicting codes" or readers' "contradictory understandings of events," Wendy B. Faris argues that that hesitation persists in magical realism, given different readers and cultural conventions (171, 188n18). I am inclined to agree with Faris on the formal similarities, but I am more interested in the political, historical, and cultural conditions under which these genres come into being and what agendas produce them.

Many of the characteristics of magical realism that Zamora and Faris describe in the introduction to their anthology surprisingly mark Forster's fantastic as well, as we have seen: it enacts a shift "from psychological to social and political concerns" (2); crosses boundaries, whether "ontological, political, geographical, or generic" (5); ideologically contests dominant realities posed by European systems of realism, capitalism, and imperialism; "makes space for interactions of diversity," (3); and speaks for the marginalized and postcolonial (2):

In magical realist texts, ontological disruption serves the purpose of political and cultural disruption: magic is often given as a cultural corrective, requiring readers to scrutinize accepted realist conventions of causality, materiality, motivation. . . . [It] often facilitates the fusion, or coexistence, of possible worlds, spaces, systems that would be irreconcilable in other modes of fiction.

(3, 5-6)

But as Zamora and Faris also remind us, literary genres are as much historical productions as formal categories (5). Magical realism emerges from indigenous or folk cultures, or from nonaligned Third World contexts of ideological opposition to Euro-American dominance. Indeed, as Michael Denning has recently argued, it has its roots in twentieth-century international proletarian literary movements, the utopian writings of the New Left, and the political and social liberationist movements that followed the Cold War (69–72). In this light, the historical and political conditions of possibility for magical realism were simply unavailable to Forster in the 1910s. To speak of homosexuality in the realist English novel at that

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time was a different proposition. Although Forster experienced some of the marginalization and suppression that led him to intuit that combining the fantastic with the realistic could produce a subversive form that both spoke of other realities and challenged dominant ones, he did not have the cultural frameworks to persist with this new form, given also the laws against publishing material concerned with homosexuality. Magical realism could render other suppressed cultural traditions or histories partly because it was not prohibited by law from doing so. Forster's fantastic was regarded at the time as merely whimsy, or at best a private code, not a political one. And though Forster lived till 1970, it was too late for him to return to the fantastic as a novelistic form, when he had long since given up writing novels.

Forster's publication of *The Celestial Omnibus* in 1911 was an act of looking back, a commemoration of his own earlier efforts, but it was also a form of valediction. With the advent of the First World War he began writing essays on matters of imperialism, racism, censorship, or war as a form of direct political intervention, as well as homoerotic short stories that he shared only with friends. Henceforth he split his writing into two modes: one, the published materials that bespoke (some) political concerns; and two, the unpublished ones that wrote explicitly of homosexuality but only for a private audience. As a form, the fantastic was then perhaps no longer needed in Forster's efforts to combine the public and private, to effect agency through his writing, though it had provided a crucial form of action for Forster at its particular time. Eric Haralson writes:

to charge "queer Forster" with not being queer enough, or with failing decisively to subvert heterosexist conventions . . . would seem to miss the point. For how, in fairness, was one to "reveal the hidden life at its source" when . . . the state and its agencies of sexual regulation made one pay with one's body for certain disclosures? (72)

Forster's fantasies worked as a covert mode to address this dilemma in a situation that kept the writer from speaking out. Within those constraints, Forster nevertheless produced a subtle, suggestive, covert language that did in fact speak—in an oblique voice.

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Notes

- 1. In 1928 Forster published another collection of six stories, *The Eternal Moment*. Both were eventually reissued together in 1947 as his *Collected Tales*. My source for the dates and venues of publication of each story is Wilde 62.
- 2. Bristow's essay also provides an account of Forster's ambivalent relation to this brotherhood. *The Independent Review* later became *The Albany Review* (Leavitt and Mitchell xii).
- 3. Forster began writing his first novel in 1902 (Lucy, published as A Room with a View in 1908), but his first published novel was Where Angels Fear to Tread (1905), followed by The Longest Journey (1907) and Howards End (1910).
- 4. Stallybrass's 14-volume edition left volume 7 as a placeholder for the stories in *The Celestial Omnibus*. The volume was later edited by Rod Mengham and published by Andre Deutsch as *The Machine Stops and Other Stories* in 1997. There is also a recent Penguin edition, published as *Selected Stories*, that includes all 12 stories published in *The Collected Tales*. Page numbers in this essay refer to *The Machine Stops*.
- 5. The critics who gave these stories any attention usually treated them apolitically, in one chapter of a book-length study. See for instance Claude Summers or John Sayre Martin.
- 6. See Richard Dellamora for an account of how post-Stonewall gay critics accused Forster of cowardice, while mainstream ones pronounced his gay writing an artistic failure
- 7. Namely "The Story of a Panic," 4-5; and "The Other Side of the Hedge," 120-21.
- 8. Furbank, Life 1: 199-201 and 214-15.
- 9. "Have this moment burnt my indecent writings. . . . Not a moral repentance, but the belief that they clogged me artistically," Forster wrote in his diary, 8 April 1922 (qtd. in Stallybrass xii).
- 10. As Jeffrey Meyers notes, "middle class opinion condemned not only homosexuals, but also homosexual art" (6). Wilde's plays were closed once he was charged. In Britain the Labouchere Amendment had criminalized "gross indecency" between men from 1885 onwards. It was only in 1967, ten years after the Wolfenden Report, that male homosexuality was partially decriminalized between consenting adults. Meyers also reports what happened to some of Forster's contemporaries when their homosexuality was discovered (8–9).

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- 11. Judith Herz, for instance, has argued that Forster's fiction is "double" (18) in nature, energized by the "tension" between "the surface heterosexual romance" and the "interior homosexual" one (52).
- 12. There is no doubt, of course, that the early novels encode an implicit concern with homosexual desire within the apparent form of the heterosexual romance—but not through the fantastic. See for instance Nelson for Forster's techniques of encoding homoeroticism in the novels. Forster himself indignantly objected to public identification of "homosexual themes" in his novels because of potential criminal action against their author. See Bristow, "Fratrum Societati" 119.
 - 13. Forster calls them fantasies himself in his introduction to *The Collected Tales*, page v.
 - 14. Many critics dismiss Forster's use of fantasy as "escapism" (e.g. Ellem 95n5). As Ellem notes, Forster's Bloomsbury friends discouraged it as well (95). Even Wilfrid Stone, in his magisterial study, casts Forster's fantastic fiction as a form of youthful rebellion, a "means of getting via dream, imagination, or wishful thinking what one cannot get in reality" (124) or a weak, ineffectual way to express "disloyalties that one is not ready to act out" (125).
 - 15. See for instance Christopher Lane 153-55.
 - 16. I discuss this also in my essay "Out in the Woods."
- 17. Scott Nelson explains why "Carpenter, Symonds and Forster so often tied issues of sexuality to issues of class and saw an enlightened view of sexuality (and correspondingly of gender roles) as essential to social change" (312).
- 18. Herz mentions Todorov briefly in addressing "The Story of a Panic," only to dismiss his theory as irrelevant because Forster was not interested in "hesitation" or "the otherness of the supernatural" (58). This misses Todorov's point that the fantastic as a genre enabled uncertainty between coexisting possibilities, and hence (as I argue) allowed Forster to speak of the forbidden without incurring penalty.
- 19. Herz reads "Other Kingdom" and "The Curate's Friend" as actually marking an escape from sexuality (32, 50), but I find the emphasis on sexuality central to their cultural work.
- 20. For instance, Miracky writes: "Rickie's shift to a more realistic and heterosexual mode in his writing yields a work that is still a fantasy; it is a product of his imagination rather than his lived experience" (142).
- 21. Eric Haralson suggests that Forster's critique of Henry James reveals in fact an

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attempt to surmount the artistic and cultural predicament that Forster shared with James: the broadly "modern" narrative challenge, first of getting the body into writing, or "making the material body into a signifying body"... and the far more vexing problem of getting the male material body to signify within a scenario of homosexual desire—the problem of publishing same-sex passion in an era of newly intensified repression. (60)

- 22. According to Heine, Forster's "diary entries show that he was studying Krishna's advice to the warrior Arjuna" in July 1912 (xii).
- 23. And sure enough, he had trouble getting publishers to accept all the stories in the collection. Indeed one story, "Mr. Andrews," was dropped because it was considered "blasphemous" (*Letters* 116n6). As if sensing both their slipperiness and their subversiveness, an early reviewer in *TLS* complained of Forster's "elfish sharpness" (qtd. by Furbank in *Letters* 188n2).
- 24. He did, however, allow Roger Fry to design the end papers (Letters 112).
- 25. These do not include the short stories with explicit homosexual content, which were published posthumously.
- 26. In 1969 Elizabeth Bowen remembered her first reading of *The Celestial Omnibus* in 1915, which seemed "revolutionary in a manner impossible to pin down" (3). The fantastic opened up "a blaze of unforeseen possibilities" for her, though

the magic was not in the matter but in the manner, the telling, the creation of a peculiar, electric climate in which ANYTHING could happen. In itself, the writing acted on me as an aesthetic shock....With each page, one was in the presence of a growing, not yet definable danger, the blindness of those endangered being part of the spell. (4)

- 27. Originally published in Putnam's Magazine, 1907.
- 28. It is, for example, the only work of Forster's to be included in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*.
- 29. While Mr. Lucas's attraction to those of another class and race could well be read as sentimental, the story is clear in its indictment of his companions' violent racism and classism (83).
- 30. One such reader's reductive "explanation" of the story is quoted by Bristow, "Fratrum Societati" 118. Forster's denial of the sexual implications of his stories likely reflects his resistance to their being read reductively as only sexual.

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- 31. They add that Pan represents the "pan-sexuality" that Eustace develops as a consequence, his conflation of the human and animal. I disagree, however, with their reading of Eustace's "apparent fear" of Pan—he stands out precisely for his lack of fear. What he fears instead is human society.
- 32. Representing the spirit that urges the integration of the body and the soul, Pan reappears frequently in Forster's writing. In 1903, for instance, in his essay "Macolnia Shops," (Abinger Harvest 170–73), he appears as a little figure on the toilet case bought by a Roman matron, subversively urging bodily ecstasy and spiritual liberation. For a reading of this essay as a coded insertion of the homoerotic into the heteronormative, see Piggford 105.
- 33. Charu Malik also notes the connection between this story and Adela's panic, but she regards the early Pan as "pastoral, fantastic," whimsical (227), whereas I find Forster's recurrent interest in the figure concentrated in his earthiness.
- 34. Originally published in The Albany Review, 1908.
- 35. See in particular his publicly voiced indignation in essays such as "Me, Them, You" (1925), "Liberty in England" (1935) (both collected in *Abinger Harvest*), and those written on the brink of war about racism and intolerance in England, "Jew Consciousness" (1939), "Racial Exercise" (1939), "Three Anti-Nazi Broadcasts" (1940), "Tolerance" (1941), "The Challenge of Our Time" (1946), and "What I Believe" (1939) (all in *Two Cheers*).
- 36. As Forster explained to Forrest Reid,

It was called *Arctic Summer*—the long cold day in which there is time to do things—and its hero is one who did not want to do things but to fight. From boyhood he asked for straight issues—to lay down his life for God or King or Woman—and he has to learn that in this latter day straight issues are not provided. (Letters 200)

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Regarding Others

Cross-Cultural Visions in African American Modernism: From Spatial Narrative to Jazz Haiku

by Yoshinobu Hakutani

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Winston Napier

Yoshinobu Hakutani's Cross-Cultural Visions in African American Modernism examines networks of aesthetic influence across national, racial, and cultural divides to show how they shape literature's response to marginalized existence. Dividing his study into three sections—"American Dialogues," "European and African Cultural Visions," and "Eastern and African American"—Hakutani explores the literary culture crossings of Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Sonia Sanchez, and James Emanuel, and offers commentary on artistic creation realized in a theater of integration and variance. According to Hakutani, works by these African American modernists and postmodernists show how, at its best, literature may promote humanistic regard for the other and affirm moral centeredness and political responsibility not through self-assertion and exclusion but rather by raising the possibility that there are "multiple worlds" for subjectivity. Reading their work, we may come to recognize truths about our own existence revealed by others whose cultures and experiences differ widely from our own. This is how Hakutani puts it:

Perhaps the most positive lesson of the cross-cultural visions, as strongly reflected in African American literature, is that seeing human existence can be achieved in ways which do not necessarily assert the self by excluding the other: truth is often a revelation from the other. However historically different their ideas and representations of men have been, both African American

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modernists and postmodernists have meditated upon the possibility of multiple worlds for human subjectivity. (16)

Hakutani's description of twentieth-century African American literature as a measured discourse of ethics and community stands, as he sees it, in stark contrast to the canon of European and Euro American modernism: "All in all, African American modernists shunned an elitist attitude which Western modernists at times betrayed" (8). Unfortunately, such a binary claim is too reductive to begin with, and furthermore Hakutani's account of a nonegotistical African American modernist identity tends, at times, to impede exploration of African American consciousness in more complex and paradoxical terms, a consciousness Alain Locke described as "that wholesome, welcome virtue of finding beauty in oneself." Locke observes that

the younger generation . . . [has] instinctive love and pride of race, and, spiritually compensating for the present lacks of America, ardent respect and love for Africa, the motherland. Gradually too, under some spiritualizing reaction, the brands and wounds of social persecution are becoming the proud stigmata of spiritual community and moral victory. Already enough progress has been made in this direction . . . to attain the full horizons of self and social criticism. (52–53)

Locke's recognition of the "full horizons of self" as informing black modernistic subjectivity leads him, in turn, to redefine African American subjectivity as a project of egocentric reinvention. He emphasized the psychological complexities of black modern writers, complexities that stemmed in part from their moral interrogation of the status quo coupled with their pursuit of political empowerment within the theater of marginality. This, in his view, not only foregrounds personal involvement with desired possibilities but also reflects the realities of black experience for the promotion of sociopolitical progress. It is precisely this complexity that Hakutani seems to neglect in his reductive tendency to describe African American modernist writers such as Wright as not primarily concerned with the examination of consciousness.

In comparing Theodore Dreiser's An American Tragedy to Wright's Native Son, for example, Hakutani writes that "the characterization of the individual in his or her respective society differs considerably" (34),

and "unlike the hostile racial conflicts dramatized in *Native Son*, what is portrayed in *An American Tragedy* is Clyde Griffiths's mind" (38). Hakutani's point is that Wright's novel is more concerned with a naturalistic mirroring of environment than with a sustained exploration of psychical complexities, but it is also possible to read *Native Son* as a highly nuanced study of the mind struggling to comprehend its delegitimization and misplacement in the greater sociological scheme of things.¹

By arguing that Wright's novel is mostly an objective representation of racial conflict and by ignoring the fact that the novel is also about the psychological challenges facing a marginalized young black male, Hakutani obscures Wright's interest in studying the conflicting effects of urban existence on modern subjectivity. In *Native Son* Wright attends to the liberating possibilities of the city as they percolate in a psyche consumed by the unsympathetic realities of urban life. Such psychological focus is explicitly apparent when Wright himself writes in "How Bigger Was Born" that he deliberately "restricted the novel to what Bigger saw and felt, to the limits of his feeling and thoughts. . . . I had the notion that such a manner of rendering made for a sharper effect, a more pointed sense of the character, his peculiar type of being and consciousness" (537).

The story of Bigger Thomas is a story of dreams as much as it is a story of survival. And to overlook the fact that Wright is concerned to depict a protagonist mirroring the psychological fallout of desire crushed by the forces of racial and economic disadvantages is to risk not seeing the novel, especially in part 3, as a study of emotional regret and moral reformation. In fact, it is Hakutani's contention that while Wright is concerned with the conditioning forces of environment, Dreiser is concerned with the forces of psychical conflict, and his "approach is basically psychological, allowing us to sympathize with the character whose principal weaknesses are ignorance and naïveté" (39). This he lays out in contrast to Wright's presentation of Bigger Thomas, a point that allows him to claim that Bigger's premeditated murder of Bessie "does not raise the same moral issue as does Clyde's" contribution to Roberta's death in An American Tragedy (40). But both Bigger and Clyde face decisions that set ambition and moral responsibility in conflict, and both choose the former over the latter. Clearly, the thematic objectives of Wright and Dreiser are not as schematically opposed as Hakutani would lead us to believe.

Hakutani's dependence on binary thinking is one of the most problematic aspects of Cross-Cultural Visions. It emerges again in his discussion

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of Toni Morrison's Jazz, where we read that "the African American in the Harlem Renaissance was so mobile and interactive with others in the community that the personal vision of life became impersonal, objective, and free of egotism" (84). This thesis stands in contradiction to the more polyvalent idea that the Harlem Renaissance nurtured the evolution of a positive and necessarily self-centered subjectivity. To speak, as Hakutani does, of the Harlem Renaissance as a discourse "free of egotism" undermines a central motivating force behind the Renaissance, namely psychological reformation, personal empowerment, and cultural self-love. Hakutani does not sufficiently emphasize throughout his book the argument that modern African American identity reflects the consequence of tensions arising from negotiating claims that are personal and communal. Whereas characters like Joe and Violet Trace experience the city as mostly but not entirely a nurturing system, Bigger Thomas finds himself in a world largely resistant to his material ambitions. These characters are unique, emotional beings, suffering the tension and disparities arising between psyche and environment, selfhood and otherness. Hakutani locates in Morrison a critical desire to produce "a deconstruction of Western culture," one that "expresses a candid opposition to the traditional hegemonic world view" (87-88) and a mental disposition that does not "assert the self by excluding the other" (16). It is precisely such binarism that leads him to see Joe Trace as "the most undeveloped character," someone who "fails to transcend the limitations of the outdated tradition of male subjectivity" (98) and impedes his broader appreciation of the psychological tensions, ambiguities, and paradoxes defining Morrison's character.

When Hakutani does manage to abandon binary constructs he is better able to see the Harlem Renaissance subjects of Jazz as emotionally invested individuals experiencing ambiguous relationships with their community and evolving senses of self. He effectively observes that "Morrison's representation of urban life as a trope for freedom and excitement also signifies nostalgia for the pastoral idyll people like Joe and Violet left behind as they moved to Harlem" (86). Such regard for the ambiguous is emphasized when Hakutani adds that "paradoxically the city, a deep starless open space, is likely to accommodate what human beings most desire—freedom and love" (88). Nostalgia for the oppressive Southern world of Vesper County is indeed alive in Joe and Violet Trace and paradoxically accompanies their celebration of Harlem as the new Jerusalem. Opposites are not entirely separate from their dialectical referents, as

simple binaries imply, and Hakutani is better off dismissing them so as to avoid making statements like this:

while modernism, especially Western modernism, smacks of elitism, postmodernism, as shown by the later Wright, Walker, and Morrison, is not only concerned with the mundane but also with other kinds of knowledge and other cultures. (9)

As any poststructuralist theorist will attest, it is not quite so easy to assume the stability and reliability of the law of noncontradiction and the rule of the excluded middle in the manner Hakutani does here, for what he confidently identifies as modern might with applied qualifications be just as readily reclassified as postmodern.

Through his discussion of modern African American subjectivity Hakutani invokes haiku consciousness as reflecting the ideal principles of its intuitive potential. These principles replicate the sensibilities one must assume in order to appropriate the consciousness required for spiritual enlightenment. He turns to Richard Wright primarily, as well as to poets Sonia Sanchez and James Emanuel, as examples of black writers engaged in cross-cultural visionary play so as to enhance spiritual rectification. He argues that Wright's production of over 4,000 haiku pieces in his later years reflects a growing awareness of the intuitive insight facilitated by the genre, as well as an understanding that "haiku masters were able to present in direct statement the paradox of human union with nature" (155). Indeed Wright may have been attracted to Eastern religions and philosophies as a means of affirming intimacy with the natural world. As Hakutani points out, Wright would have already been aware of the appeal of such intimacy, insofar as his experiences in the rural world of his childhood would have predisposed him to it. Cross-Cultural Visions reminds us that "the evidence of Wright's identification with nature and his use of its motif stretch from 'Big Boy Leaves Home,' with its rural events around the swimming hole, to Black Boy," where he memorializes in language prefacing his later haiku-inspired voice "delight in seeing long straight rows of red and green vegetables,' and he expresses nostalgia when he hears 'the crying strings of wild geese winging south against a bleak autumn sky" (154).

It is in pointing out such cross-cultural richness in African American writing that Hakutani establishes his importance as a keen commentator on the often overlooked hybrid expanse of even some of its best-known

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works. In Morrison's Beloved, for example, he recognizes narrative engagement of "unity, continuity, and infinity" as distinctly African, a point heightened by his capacity to connect the novel's epistemological assumptions with Akan cosmology. The philosophical principle at hand involves a celebration of the community over the individual, a celebration that includes the spirits of loved ones who have long since died. This Akan eschatological thesis is, according to Hakutani, the epistemic subtext supporting the antirationalistic reality of Beloved's return, the general interaction of the dead with the living in the novel, and the nonlinear movement of time that regulates the unique narrative representation of place and situation. As Hakutani argues, this is an expression of African idealism, by which "time plays a crucial role in unifying various planes of existence" (145) and where the Akan doctrine of God gives Morrison the metaphysical principles to portray "spirits and ghosts as if they were alive" (146). Taking his cross-cultural argument one step further, Hakutani notes some fundamental similarities between African religions and Buddhism:

Africans believed in reincarnation just as do Buddhists: ancestors freely return to the present, and their spirits reside in nonhuman objects. Africans indeed denied the Western dichotomy of life and death. For them life in the spiritual world exactly reflected that in this world: the dead carry on their lives exactly as do the living in the present world. (150)

His discussion here of Morrison's novel is a powerful affirmation of the culturally plural corollaries circulating as narrative inspiration and responsible in part for unique thematic designs of twentieth-century African American literature.

One of the most ambitious projects in Cross-Cultural Visions is Hakutani's appropriation of Lacanian psychoanalysis to describe the absence of the subject exemplified by haiku poetry. He suggests that "Lacan is as highly critical of human egotism as is a Zen master" (158) who celebrates the perpetual flux of psychical being and considers any hope of assailing such chaos through belief in the centralizing power of ego to be a hopeless and misguided pursuit. Unfortunately, however, Lacan is the last person to whom Hakutani should turn for theoretical justification of Zen consciousness as mediating access to the Real. And when he claims that for Lacan the "unconscious, then, is closer to the real than it is to

the symbolic" (157), and that "the imaginary is closer to the real than is the symbolic," we find ourselves confronting an extraordinary misreading. This is largely because Hakutani does not acknowledge Lacan's distinction between the Real and reality, where the latter is the interpretation of what as the Real we can never experience. Reality is a symbolic processing of the absolute, in short, the phenomenological shortcut to which human consciousness is limited, and forever separate from the Real, from the impossible. In Slavoj Žižek's words, what we experience as

reality is not the "thing itself," it is always already symbolized, constituted, structured by way of symbolic mechanisms. The problem resides in the fact that symbolization ultimately always fails, that it never succeeds in fully covering the real, that it always involves some unsettled, unredeemed symbolic debt. (241)

Symbolization is what Lacan understands as the imperative medium of cultural codification, the only means through which conception and expression are possible. It will never provide access to truth as Hakutani argues. In fact, the suppression of subjectivity he claims is necessary to access the Real is for Lacan hopelessly unrealizable. The idea of subjectivity is itself a signifying event occurring only as symbolization; subjectivity is symbolic and can never be conceived or can never conceive without the signifying operations of linguistic structuration. When Hakutani writes that "The absence of the subject as a first step in composing haiku is akin to Lacan's concept of the subject," and that only under such conditions is "the subject able to approach and encounter the truth of life, what Lacan calls the real and the unsymbolizable" (157), it is clear he misrepresents Lacan's understanding of the Real by confusing it with Lacan's very distinct and constructivist account of what we grasp as reality. For Lacan the Real as we can only imagine and speak of it through the symbolic play of language is, in his words, "that which prevents one from saying the whole truth about it" (31). Forever unattainable as the asymptote is to the hyperbola, "the real successfully resists the intercessions of language" (Bowie 110).

Despite its flaws, Cross-Cultural Visions offers thoughtful commentary on the literary landscape that nurtured many mid- and late-twentieth-century African American modernists. It also reminds us of the degree to which African American writers creatively adapted Euro American, European, African, and Asian literary and philosophical influences. As Hakutani

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explores networks "that have mediated upon the possibility of multiple worlds for human subjectivity" (16), he also shows convincingly how African American aesthetic sensibilities were, in various ways, influenced by modernist and postmodernist assumptions and techniques. Once we come to grips with his theoretical shortcomings, we are left with a book that still has much to offer. His study rewards the reader with an abundance of invaluable contextualization. The book will undoubtedly enrich how we read and interpret African American literature, revealing how its featured writers represent powerful examples of aesthetic integration. In this sense Hakutani seeks to offer more than another study of textual explication. He also wants us to see these acts of aesthetic integration, these cross-cultural visions, as ethical indications of culturally expansive regard for tolerance and integration.

Note

1. Dale Peterson, for example, maintains that "In Native Son Wright moved boldly toward a Dostoyevskian exposure of the lacerated psyche of the insulted and the injured" (381); and for an innovative analysis of the psychosexual complexities grounding Bigger Thomas's social identity, see Roderick Ferguson's Aberrations in Black, especially 31–53.

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Ezra Pound and the Ideology of Art

Ezra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism

by Rebecca Beasley

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 221 pages

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Ezra Pound's significant engagement with visual art and artists makes him a natural subject for visual culture studies. As a young poet, Pound worked under the spell of Pre-Raphaelite painters and the impressionist James Abbott McNeill Whistler; later, as he "modernized," Wyndham Lewis and Henri Gaudier-Brzeska (among others) showed him the way. Throughout his London years (1908-20) Pound worked closely with artists, collaborating with them on projects such as BLAST, sitting for them (resulting in portraits by Lewis, Gaudier, and Alvin Langdon Coburn), "booming" them in his reviews (as in the art criticism he wrote for the New Age from 1917 to 1920), debating with them, and of course frequently infuriating them. The impact of vorticism, along with futurist painting, cubism, and collage on the "open form" of the Cantos has long been a central topic of Pound scholarship, from Hugh Kenner's The Pound Era and Timothy Materer's Vortex through Marjorie Perloff's The Futurist Moment, Charles Altieri's Painterly Abstraction in Modernist American Poetry, and Vincent Sherry's Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, and Radical Modernism.

In this well-documented field it is not easy to find an opening for an original critical intervention, but in Ezra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism Rebecca Beasley offers new research findings and detailed analysis of Pound's engagement with the milieu of artists, art criticism, and the ideas driving contemporary art during Pound's formative years in London and Paris. What distinguishes her approach from earlier studies of Pound and the visual arts, she claims, is her focus on the "shifting ideological significance" of the arts for him (2), "an insistence that the visual arts be seen as part of the 'argument' of Pound's work, providing a model that is not restricted to the formal" (7). In the current critical parlance, "visual culture" usually refers to all cultural artifacts and activities with a visual component (including advertising, new and old media, toys, fashion, landscape, etc.). Beasley's scope is restricted, however, by Pound's

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own preference for the traditional fine arts of painting and sculpture. In this book, approaching Pound through the discipline of visual culture studies means shifting the focus away from works of art or poetry and toward the discourse of art criticism as Pound practiced it. Beasley has exhaustively documented Pound's changing ideas about the visual arts, based on his prolific published and unpublished prose, and used her results to trace the evolution of his politics. She concentrates her attention on four episodes during the years 1908–24 that, she argues, map out his ideological transformation from individualist to fascist follower.

Beyond its considerable documentary function, the book also seeks to illuminate the relationship between formalism and politics in Pound's art criticism and in criticism generally. Beasley contends that the vocabulary Pound developed for writing about art in the nineteen-teens was motivated by conservative political beliefs that led to his later fascism. She also argues, mainly by implication, that Pound's vocabulary and his work as a critic made possible the development of an academic practice of "formalist" literary criticism. She identifies this practice with New Criticism ("the formalist literary criticism in which modernist studies was forged" [205]), but she also seems to have in mind any analysis of modernist writing that privileges formal experimentation for its own sake, such as Perloff's. "Formalism" is thus seen to carry a political agenda, whether as waged openly by Pound or as concealed in the practices of academic critics.

Chapter 1 serves to orient this argument in the context of Pound's earliest art criticism, which he wrote as a graduate student smarting from his encounter with philology. Reacting against the academic study of literature, Pound proposed aesthetic appreciation, or "taste," as an alternative. Pound adopted the concept of taste both from late-nineteenth-century American culture generally and from his hero James Abbott McNeill Whistler in particular. Whistler provided Pound with a language of form and abstraction to justify the elevation of taste and the value it endorses, beauty. Beasley examines Pound's unpublished writings on contemporary American painting, including Mary Cassatt, and the "Whistlerian" poems "In That Country" and "For Italico Brass" (which Pound himself never published). About these works she concludes, "they constitute a consistent effort to establish a poetics of beauty, a poetics which would resurface, clothed in a remarkably similar range of imagery, in the Cantos" (43). This chapter is based on "Ezra Pound's Whistler," Beasley's earlier and less politically oriented article about Pound's admiration for and self-fashioning

after Whistler; here she uses the discussion of Whistler's influence to launch her larger claim about the inherently ideological content of formalist art criticism. "This formalism," she writes, is "not politically neutral: its middle class meritocratic values are closely related to the individualism central to Pound's political beliefs throughout his career" (49).

The development of Pound's "anarchist individualism" in conjunction with his ideas on art is the subject of chapter 2 (covering 1914-15). In London Pound contributed to two journals that represented opposing political platforms: Dora Marsden's The New Freewoman: An Individualist Review, renamed the Egoist in 1914, and A. R. Orage's socialist New Age. Though the New Age was one of the earliest outlets for Pound's prose (and continued to print his work even after his departure from London in 1920), Beasley demonstrates his closer ideological affiliation with Marsden on the grounds of their individualist creed. Pound and Marsden also shared a project of reforming language toward the immediacy of visual images, which is to say, pushing language toward the condition of proper names rather than abstractions. Beasley traces this concept, whose role in imagism is well known, not only to the usual suspects, Remy de Gourmont and T. E. Hulme, but also to a new figure, the American chemist Hudson Maxim, whose Science of Poetry proposed a social Darwinist theory of language that privileges poetry's visualization of concepts. Beasley's aim in tracing this genealogy is to show that the politics Pound shared with Marsden—"anti-democratic" (99), "anarchist" (81) individualism underwrote their shared conceptions of language and its relation to the visual.1 The connections between Marsden and Pound, the Egoist and imagism, ideology and immediacy, are primarily associations:

Although Marsden's and Stirner's philosophies were not the direct source of imagist individuality, particularity and nominalism, a certain amount of shared intellectual heritage accounts for these significant correlations between their projects. Hulme's Bergsonism provided imagism with the nominalism Marsden drew from Stirner, and the origin of the image itself in French symbolism connected it to individualist anarchists such as Laurent Tailhade and Gourmont. (85)

The easier-to-follow argument concerning Pound's relationship to the Egoist is negative: readers of the New Age attacked him as "the enemy" (91). They identified him with the politics of the Egoist, although he had

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contributed to the *New Age* for longer. They perceived his defense of artistic innovation, praise of French poets, formalism, and advocacy of free verse as an affront to their "Ruskinian socialism" (92–93). Some of the attacks on Pound are hilarious parodies, such as the following from a contributor named Beatrice Hastings in 1913:

Remy de Gourmont, Imagiste; Vildrac, Humaniste; Tailharde [sic], Helleniste; Romains, Unanimiste, and others each one in his own unique way bent upon clarifying poetic diction, making a plain statement and scheduling his times for posterity. But to Jammes I allot a special niche upon the new Parnassus, for Jammes is more uniquely unique than—I had nearly said—than any other French poet, but we must conserve our plaudits—any of the above-mentioned unique poets; he makes things more his own than I can express; he has perfected the new perfection of being a man in the street; he is your very ordinary self, your office-boy, your office, your telephone, your insurance card, and your stamp! He is the great eliminator of the abstract, the general, the universal, the essential, the transcendental—but he is the grand recorder of the Detail! (91)

Beasley notes the emphasis on uniqueness, which Pound used as an aesthetic criterion but readers perceived as a political argument for individualism. (From an American perspective, Pound's individualism seems unexceptionable; he shared these beliefs with his compatriots on both the political left and right. Exported to a European context, his views were hard to map onto the available political axes, for example of the New Age and the Egoist, and thus we find him incoherently sympathizing with the causes of both journals although they viewed each other as enemies.)

Perhaps the most interesting part of this wide-ranging chapter is Beasley's detailed examination of what Pound knew when during this explosive period of innovation in painting: it turns out that he was either out of town during both postimpressionist exhibitions or oblivious to them, and not really in tune with the rapidly changing art scene until 1913. This finding may undermine previous speculations about how cubism, collage, and futurism directly influenced Pound's poetry as early as 1911–12. Beasley herself refrains almost entirely from interpreting Pound's poetry, particularly in this chapter. Her choice to discuss Pound's art criticism rather than his poetry reflects her commitment to scholarship over

interpretation. She has chosen to work on an area of his writing where there is more room for archival and historical research, and she amply supports her central contention that Pound's art criticism—including his formalism and privileging of immediacy—were always ideologically motivated. The tricky relationship between the ideological-aesthetic nexus of his critical writing and his poetic practice remains to be explored.

Though Pound was eager to boom innovation and abstraction in his journalism, his own poetic creativity continued to be channeled through pastiche and translation throughout this period. As an antidote to his sentimental medievalism (for example in Canzoni), Pound practiced writing epigrams in the style of Catullus—a change in tone, but hardly a case of innovation. Indeed, his constant propaganda for the "new" must be balanced against his lifelong nostalgia for and obsession with the past as a model for the present. Though an ardent individualist in politics and criticism, Pound also held the seemingly inconsistent view of subjectivity as a passive "clear space" through which flow "the souls of all men great" from the past ("Histrion"). The "argument" of Pound's poetry is by no means clear about the status of the individual, except to show that he continued to be troubled by the basic question of what a person or subject is, and whether persons have historical agency, as the creed of individualism would seem to imply we do. This question remains an issue in the Cantos, which argue both for economic determinism (that the quality of art and thought created in any age is a consequence of the economic conditions of the time) and against it (that individual great men are capable of changing the course of history and culture). To say this is not to contradict what he wrote as a critic, nor to excuse his political views as he expressed and acted on them, but only to point out that poems engage with ideology in complex, conflicted ways—and may capture the writer's relationship with political ideology more accurately than his rhetoric.

Indeed, Beasley's research shows that Pound was inconsistent in his views of visual art, even in his published criticism. While chapters 1 and 2 build a case for Pound's ideological investment in the visual arts, chapter 3 documents his withdrawal from this engagement, and chapter 4 traces a temporary renewal of interest on different terms. Pound's gift as a poet was precisely his susceptibility to new influences—what he was reading, or someone he just met—but the ease with which he could change his mind or adopt an inconsistent view makes it hard to construct a coherent narrative of his development. Beasley has done as much as is possible

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art. In chapter 3 (1915–20), Beasley follows his process of drafting and revising the first Cantos to show how Pound cut references to contemporary art, gradually emphasizing the poem's textuality as a verbal or written work. He decided not to "write to paint" (in the words of the 1917 "Three Cantos"), as he realized that works of visual art become commodities on a luxury market in a way that books do not. This realization seems to have been driven by his experiences as Gaudier-Brzeska's executor and John Quinn's acquisition agent. Beasley's reading of Mauberly as a repudiation of luxury—and of the visual arts insofar as they tend toward luxury items—is one of the most insightful passages of the book, offering a way of interpreting the poem that does not submit to its paralyzing ironies.

In the final episode of the book we see Pound in Paris (1921–24) simultaneously transferring his loyalties to Dada and succumbing to the postwar "rappel à l'ordre" of nationalism and classicism. Like the Dadaists, Pound sought a kind of art that resisted commodification, an art that critiqued the conditions of its own production and reception. He appreciated Dada as the expression of the artist's "intelligence," a value that he began to elevate above the formally pleasing artwork. The criterion of intelligence, and the theory of expressivism in art that it implies, offered Pound an improved platform for his individualist beliefs. Yet, at the same time,

the works he praised most highly were those that could be assimilated to the conservative aesthetic values of post-war Paris. What is more, his praise is framed in terms that echo those of the conservatives pursuing a nationalist political agenda, the very people . . . he was simultaneously disparaging. (175)

In Paris Pound developed appreciations for two artists whose work pulled him more in the direction of the "rappel à l'ordre," though both were associated with the avant-garde left: the Romanian sculptor Constantin Brancusi and the French painter Fernand Léger. In his defense of their work he articulated new elements of his aesthetic: utility and efficiency (respectively). In emphasizing the potential utility of art, Pound was attempting to reconcile his appreciation of form with the sense of

social responsibility that C. H. Douglas's *Economic Democracy* had awakened in him. Léger's "machine aesthetic" inspired Pound with the idea of engineering as compatible with beauty, and the engineer as hero. In Beasley's analysis it is only a step from engineer worship and the cult of efficiency, both popular in the United States in the teens and twenties, to Pound's preference for efficient tyrants.

If at this point one sees the end of the road all too clearly, with individualism both leading to and being betrayed by totalitarianism, the inconsistency of Pound's views is also significant. Beasley warns that "it would be a mistake to see Pound's career as unrepresentative of his era, or his tragedy as the result of egotism and eccentricity: his decisions are explicable and comprehensible" (205). Her careful documentation does explain how Pound moved from one view or enthusiasm to the next, yet also dramatizes precisely his eccentric volatility in a milieu of more moderate, rational writers and thinkers. Pound's inconsistency seems to be the result of his personal susceptibility to new stimuli, amounting to what we might now call an attention deficit; of the political flux of the postwar years, before the polarization of the right and left; and of the mismatch between American individualism (a pervasive feature of the nineteenth-century culture that produced him) and its more politically charged European counterpart. Beasley's documentation of the shifts in his ideas is valuable, perhaps above and beyond her argument for the ideological grounding of formalism. Pound's "ideology" was not a system but a mix of conflicting ideas received from many sources; insofar as complexity of thought makes for more interesting poems, the heterogeneity of his views probably enriched his writing during this time. Certainly the single-mindedness of his later politics did not.

Ezra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism represents an impressive labor of collecting and analyzing primary and secondary materials pertaining to Pound's views on art. Beasley has done a favor for future students of Pound's work by assembling so much information in one place, including extensive discussion of previous scholarship. Pound remains a puzzle, however; at once a crafty propagandist and the dupe of every new idea and personality he encountered. Fortunately, we value Pound, if at all, for his poems rather than his bad ideas.

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Note

1. A relevant fact of Pound's relationship to the *Egoist* is that he was not paid for his contributions, and thus (as he claimed in letters to Joyce), he saved his most outrageous material for these articles, which he wrote quickly, without editing.

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Selected Affinities

Selected Poems

by Frank O'Hara New edition. Edited by Mark Ford. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008. 265 pages

Beautiful Enemies: Friendship and Postwar American Poetry

by Andrew Epstein

New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. 359 pages

Terence Diggory

It is no longer necessary to argue that Frank O'Hara is a leading figure in postmodern American poetry—that is, chronologically, poetry written since World War II, and aesthetically, "poetry as something living rather than an academic parlor game," according to O'Hara's friend John Ashbery (Introduction ix). Evidently, though, it still seems necessary to shape O'Hara's large achievement through the process of selection. The quantity of his output made each of the five principal volumes that he published during his lifetime (1926-1966) effectively a selection from a wider range of work, as Donald Allen, O'Hara's most influential editor, pointed out in the editor's note to the 1971 Collected Poems (v). Allen followed that volume, the first Collected, with a Selected Poems in 1974.

Now, after a new edition of The Collected Poems in 1995, revised by Allen but not expanded, we have a new Selected Poems edited by the British poet Mark Ford, who published a slimmer selection in England in 2003 under the title "Why I Am Not a Painter" and Other Poems. In his introduction, Ford justifies the new Selected Poems by referring to the uncomfortable weight of The Collected Poems—three and a half pounds on his kitchen scales!—and to the publication of new material since the original collected-selected pair. Ford includes one poem from Early Writing (1977), seven from Poems Retrieved (1977), and the play Try! Try! (1953) version) from Selected Plays (1978). Not counting the play, the number of poems in Ford's Selected is exactly the same as in Allen's: 140. But there are significant differences among each editor's choices, and consequently differences in the shape of O'Hara's achievement implied in each volume.

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How such shaping occurs has been the subject of a number of recent studies of contemporary poetry, including Andrew Epstein's Beautiful Enemies. In Epstein's account of the trend, such studies

rigorously examine the material realities of writing communities, especially how they relate to such things as the construction of community, the strategies of poetic careers, the nature of gender roles, the process of canonization, or the institutions of poetry, both establishment and underground. (7–8)

The romantic view of literature as the product of isolated genius is challenged by this approach, but recent practitioners generally avoid the extreme form of social determinism that coincided with various theories of the "death of the author" during the 1980s. Epstein, in particular, leaves a lot of room for individual agency, though he takes pains not to equate individuality with the concept of unified selfhood. As for the concept of community, he focuses on the minimal social unit of friendship between individuals rather than complex institutions.

Three writers serve as Epstein's test cases: Frank O'Hara, John Ashbery, and Amiri Baraka, with O'Hara providing the pivot. The friendships in question are O'Hara's friendship with Ashbery, a relationship at the center of what became known as the New York School of poetry; and O'Hara's friendship with Baraka (then LeRoi Jones), a relationship largely forgotten in the wake of Baraka's later turn to black separatism. Thus, as much as Epstein's book is about a writing community, it is also about O'Hara and his gift for creating community through friendship. Epstein quotes the painter Larry Rivers, from a statement made at O'Hara's funeral: "Frank O'Hara was my best friend. There are at least sixty people in New York who thought Frank O'Hara was their best friend" (86).

To his credit, Epstein is principally concerned with the role of friendship as a stimulus to creation; his study consists mainly of close readings of texts by O'Hara, Ashbery, and Baraka. However, his understanding of friendship can also illuminate the reception of texts exemplified in the two editions of O'Hara's Selected Poems. Donald Allen was a friend of O'Hara's, though not himself a poet, and in the editor's note to his Selected Poems (1974) he acknowledges three of O'Hara's poet friends as his chief advisors: Bill Berkson, whom Allen identifies as "my neighbor" (in Bolinas, California), and Kenneth Koch and James Schuyler, the two poets most often identified, along with O'Hara and Ashbery, as members

of the first generation of the New York School. Berkson, born in 1939, was one of the first poets to emerge in the second generation.

If Ashbery's name is conspicuously absent from Allen's acknowledgments, his presence can be felt both implicitly and explicitly in the selection by Mark Ford, for whom Ashbery has been the chief connection to the New York School. Ashbery reviewed Ford's first volume of poems, Landlocked (1992), and supplied forewords to Ford's critical study, Raymond Roussel and the Republic of Dreams (2000), and his second volume of poems, Soft Sift (2003)—all of these essays now assembled in Ashbery's Selected Prose (2004). The book-length interview John Ashbery in Conversation with Mark Ford was published in England in 2003. In his introduction to the new Selected O'Hara, Ford repeats Ashbery's reservations about O'Hara's early work, which Ashbery had already registered in his introduction to the Collected O'Hara. However, the phrase that Ford quotes, concerning work "marred by a certain nervous preciosity" (xiii), is taken from a separate memoir of O'Hara, in which Ashbery passes the same judgment on his own early work: "much of the poetry we both wrote as undergraduates [at Harvard] now seems marred by a certain nervous preciosity, in part a reaction to the cultivated blandness around us which also impelled us to callow aesthetic pronouncements" (Selected Prose 174). The complexities of friendship are such that one is often speaking about oneself when speaking about a friend.

Both of the Selected editions of O'Hara are mediated through such complexities. In neither case do I mean to suggest that the editor, each an intelligent person capable of forming independent judgments, was simply following dictation. Friendship is a more resistant medium than that, as Epstein demonstrates. A case in point is "To a Poet" (1954), a poem included by both Allen and Ford. Epstein confirms (104), on Kenneth Koch's authority, that the poem is addressed to Koch, though it also addresses obliquely a model whom both Koch and O'Hara admired, William Carlos Williams. In the terms employed in the poem, it appears at first that O'Hara is playing Williams off against Koch, embracing a style that would be "plain and plainer" (CP 185), such as we might identify with Williams, in contrast to the more "rococo" experiments that Koch and O'Hara had produced over the past couple of years. Epstein cites "Hatred" (1952), "Easter" (1952), and "Second Avenue" (1953) as examples of this style in O'Hara's work (104). Evidently Koch had viewed O'Hara's recent turn to a plainer style as a defection: "So you do not like / my new verses,"

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O'Hara bluntly challenges in "To a Poet." But at the end of the poem, he also challenges Williams, reversing the older poet's famous dictum "No ideas but in things" to read "No things but in ideas." The point, according to Epstein, is that "O'Hara refuses to be confined by either his friend's or his mentor's dictates about his poetic development" (106). The creative stimulus of friendship, according to Epstein, is as much a provocation to turn from as to turn toward the friend. Yet, since his model is friendship, Epstein emphasizes the pleasure in the provocation rather than the "anxiety of influence" posited by Harold Bloom.

"Hatred," "Easter," and "Second Avenue" all appear in Allen's Selected O'Hara, for which Koch served as an advisor, but not in Ford's edition, mediated through Ford's friendship with Ashbery. As Epstein notes (307n18), Ashbery cited these poems, in his introduction to the Collected O'Hara, as examples of the early style that O'Hara needed to leave behind:

What was needed was a vernacular corresponding to the creatively messy New York environment to ventilate the concentrated Surrealist imagery of poems like "Hatred," "Easter," and "Second Avenue." (Introduction x)

In prescribing the vernacular, Ashbery appears to align himself with Dr. Williams's plain style, as invoked by O'Hara against Koch. However, in his own work Ashbery employs the vernacular in a peculiar way that brings him no closer to the later O'Hara than he was to the earlier. In a typical Ashbery poem, the speech itself is familiar, but it is notoriously difficult to pin down who is speaking or what he is speaking about.

In O'Hara, the situation is reversed: even when the imagery is bizarre and the syntax disjointed, there is a strong sense of a particular person finding expression by these means. Epstein reads O'Hara's early poem "Ashes on Saturday Afternoon" (1952)—"Ashes" was Ashbery's nickname—for a "suggestive contrast between Ashbery's meditative, evasive, reticent mode and O'Hara's personal and direct, speech-oriented poetics" (246). The poem urges "the poet" not to be silent—the condition temporarily imposed on Ashbery by a writer's block—but rather to speak out against convention and dogma "in languages more livid than / vomit on Sunday after wafer and prayer." Inverting his stance in "To a Poet," where O'Hara refused to be like Koch, in "Ashes on Saturday Afternoon" he "urges Ashbery to be more O'Hara-like," according to Epstein (245;

Epstein's italics). We may perhaps infer Ashbery's response from the fact that "Ashes on Saturday Afternoon" too has been dropped from Ford's Selected O'Hara, though it appears in Allen's.

Overall, Ford's selection reinforces the image of O'Hara as the "best friend" at the center of a circle of friends, the image that provides the starting point for Epstein's study. In a review in *The New Yorker*, Dan Chiasson observed,

The best-known poems in Ford's edition—"The Day Lady Died," "Personal Poem," "Ave Maria," "A Step Away from Them," "Having a Coke with You"—feel like attempts to make a built-to-last social world founded upon friendship. (85)

Chiasson adds, in parenthesis, that "Andrew Epstein's excellent study" makes the same point. While I agree with Chiasson about the excellence of Epstein's study, I disagree that it shows O'Hara making a world of friendship "built-to-last." The mobility of friendship is crucial in Epstein's account of O'Hara, Ashbery, and Baraka. The extent to which friendship itself is crucial to the work of these writers can be overstated, as I believe Ford does in the context he constructs for O'Hara's "best-known poems," all of which had also been selected by Allen. Ford has cut poems where the action takes place chiefly in the language, especially early poems associated with Koch. Admittedly, he has retained later poems of a similar sort associated with Berkson, notably "Biotherm" (1962), to which Allen assigned prominence by placing it out of chronological order at the end of his edition. In place of the poems he cuts, Ford adds poems where the action takes place among friends.

"A Party Full of Friends" (1951), one of the poems Ford has selected from *Poems Retrieved*, receives special attention in his introduction, supplying, as it were, the keynote for the poems that follow. The play that Ford includes, *Try! Try!*, has characters named Violet and John because the roles were originally played by O'Hara's friends Violet "Bunny" Lang and John Ashbery. As Epstein argues, the play dramatizes the rivalry that was an important component of Ashbery's friendship with O'Hara (249–54). In a third character, Jack, O'Hara projects a degree of self-criticism that is surely relevant to a reading of his *Selected Poems*. However, his personal memories of Bunny Lang, the subject of two of the six prose essays that Ford has appended to his edition, do not serve this critical function. In-

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stead, they reinforce the temptation to read past O'Hara's poetry to get at his biography.

Epstein intends to lead his reader in the opposite direction, from biography to the poetry. Aware of the shortcomings of previous studies of writing communities, he acknowledges the importance of "investigating how such relationships, and the mixture of angst and inspiration they provide, become intertwined with the subject, form, rhetoric, and imagery of actual poems" (8). When O'Hara writes to a friend, as in "To a Poet" or "Ashes on Saturday Afternoon," it is relatively easy to carry out the type of reading that Epstein proposes, because there is no question that friendship is "intertwined" with the poem's subject. However, in the case of Ashbery, where the language seems to have been cut free of ties to speaker and referent, the task is more difficult. Epstein resorts to reading Ashbery's poems as "vague allegories" (147), a method that subverts the values usually associated with close reading, because allegory locates meaning somewhere other than the immediate sense of the text. Thus, "Lithuanian Dance Band" (1973) allegorically mourns the loss of O'Hara in Epstein's reading (163-64), and "Street Musicians" (1977) "articulates a moving allegory of the dispersal of the New York School itself" (276).

In translating these poems into personal relationships, Epstein overlooks the primary relationships among the words that render any translation problematic. He runs into this problem head-on in his explication of "Choses Passagères" ("Passing Things"; 1955), a poem that O'Hara composed in French and dedicated to Ashbery. In attempting to translate this poem into English Epstein made the fascinating discovery that it proceeds through a sequence of key words arranged in alphabetical order and expanded into idiomatic phrases associated with each key word in a 1951 edition of Cassell's French-English dictionary. "Choses Passagères" is much too rarefied a linguistic object to appear in either edition of O'Hara's Selected Poems; it is included in The Collected Poems. Koch first published it in 1961 in the New York School house journal, Locus Solus, as "a collaboration between Frank O'Hara and the French language" (Epstein 261). By reading it back into a dialogue between O'Hara and Ashbery, Epstein reverses the direction between poetry and biography.

Because it is simultaneously autobiographical and allegorical, the early work of LeRoi Jones, before he translated himself into Amiri Baraka, allows Epstein to synthesize his reading strategies with especially impressive results. The tension of difference within the network of identifications

that constitutes friendship, a tension that generates much of the energy in the texts Epstein examines, is magnified in the differences between O'Hara and Jones on the basis of both race and sexual orientation. As a gay man, O'Hara demonstrated a sexual attraction to Jones that may or may not have been reciprocated. Starting from this biographical circumstance, Epstein traces its transformation into an internal division between two sides of Jones's own psyche, white vs. black, gay vs. straight, in his allegorical novel The System of Dante's Hell, written between 1959 and 1961 but not published until 1965, the year of Jones's move from New York's interracial downtown bohemia to black uptown Harlem. In this case, Epstein's insistence on locating Jones's text in its specific biographical circumstances, including Jones's ambivalent relation with O'Hara at the time of its composition, frees it from the distortions of a generalized narrative about a triumphant journey from self-denial to the affirmation of racial identity, the template commonly imposed in previous criticism of this novel. In Epstein's reading, Jones's ambivalence about identity increases the novel's dramatic power, which soon took dramatic form in Jones's play The Toilet (1961).

Unfortunately, the ambivalence of identity can sometimes pose an obstacle to interpretation as much as it generates dramatic power. Among Kenneth Koch's papers at the New York Public Library, Epstein discovered a poem titled "Finding Leroi a Lawyer," referring to obscenity charges that were lodged against Jones in 1961 for publishing a segment from *The System of Dante's Hell* in his newsletter *The Floating Bear*. The poem was filed in a folder marked "Frank O'Hara," and Epstein, assuming it was written by O'Hara, reads it for hints of O'Hara's "inability to connect with Baraka" (203). However, the authorship of the poem is uncertain and has become, since the publication of Epstein's book, the subject of much debate among Epstein, Bill Berkson, and another second-generation New York School poet, Tony Towle, on John Latta's blog *Isola di Rifiuti*.

Having been involved in the original effort to retrieve O'Hara's manuscripts after his untimely death in 1966, Berkson is well aware of the temptation to attach O'Hara's name to a text simply because one wants there to be more O'Hara. In his magazine Big Sky in 1974, Berkson published an "O'Hara" poem that turned out to be by David Shapiro. One of the revisions in Donald Allen's second edition of O'Hara's Collected Poems was the removal of a text that was actually by Bunny Lang. Poems Retrieved, also edited by Allen, still contains a text that is by Ruth Krauss

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rather than O'Hara. I know of no reason to doubt the authorship of any of the texts in the recent *Selected Poems*, but the history of the transmission of O'Hara's poems serves as a reminder that the process of selection is always embedded in "the material realities of writing communities" that are the subject of Epstein's study (7).

As a framework for understanding these material realities, Epstein offers the tradition of American pragmatism. His title phrase, Beautiful Enemies, comes from the 1841 essay "Friendship," in which Emerson attempts to explain the paradox that friends can promote rather than inhibit self-reliance. A more robust conception of the social self, Epstein observes, arises later in pragmatist thought, for instance in the work of John Dewey. One of the benefits of including Baraka in Epstein's triad of writers is the access thus gained to important new scholarship on the connections between pragmatist thought and African American culture, such as the work of Ross Posnock and Michael Magee. Magee's book Emancipating Pragmatism concludes with a chapter on the Baraka-O'Hara relationship, and Epstein draws extensively on it (citing an earlier version of the chapter published in Contemporary Literature).

For instance, Magee enables Epstein to highlight Baraka's role in O'Hara's "Personal Poem" (1959), in which Baraka joins O'Hara for lunch, and the related essay "Personism" (1959), which Baraka published in his magazine Yugen (it is, by the way, the one essay reprinted in both editions of O'Hara's Selected Poems). "With Baraka as its inspiration," Epstein writes, "O'Hara's poem captures the sense of friendship as conduit and exchange" (201). Explicating the essay's attempt to locate a poem "between two persons," Magee makes the association with pragmatism explicit: "A good pragmatist, O'Hara wants both: the contingency of the poem and its communicative agency, so that at any moment what stands between you and me might be between you and me" (140).

O'Hara and Ashbery's resistance to any sort of program—including the notion of a New York School—makes it somewhat more difficult to connect them with specific sources in the pragmatist tradition than is the case with Baraka. However, both Magee and Epstein, following O'Hara's biographer Brad Gooch, identify a key channel of influence through an essay by Paul Goodman, "Advance-Guard Writing, 1900–1950," which O'Hara recommended enthusiastically to his friends. As Epstein acknowledges, I have taken the same essay as a starting point for a study of the concept of community in New York School poetry, which I mention here

partly to acknowledge the acknowledgment, but mainly to point out the choices that Epstein has made among a set of options provided by his material. Whereas I connect Goodman's essay to a European tradition and apply Jean-Luc Nancy's recent theory of "inoperative community," Epstein grounds Goodman's essay in an American tradition—pragmatism—and applies a perspective that is generally more historical than theoretical.

Each approach has its advantages for highlighting certain patterns in the complex texture of the poetry in question. Appreciation of the complexity itself is aided by recognition of what any one approach leaves out as well as what it keeps in—as comparison of the two editions of O'Hara's Selected Poems makes possible. Pragmatism, Epstein argues, embraces pluralism. No one selection and no one critical approach will be adequate to represent the poet who prayed for "Grace / to be born and live as variously as possible," as O'Hara did in one of his most important poems, "In Memory of My Feelings" (1956), which is included in both Selected editions. In another poem that enjoys that privilege, "My Heart" (1955), O'Hara playfully deflates the pretensions of "aficionados" who would confine him to any one identity:

And if

some aficionado of my mess says "That's not like Frank!," all to the good! I don't wear brown and grey suits all the time, do I?

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Concealing Leonard's Nose:

Virginia Woolf, Modernist Antisemitism, and "The Duchess and the Jeweller"

Lara Trubowitz

"Although I loathe anti-semitism, I do dislike Jews."
—Harold Nicolson (469)

On 1 May 1935 Virginia and Leonard Woolf set out by car from Harwich, England, for a month-long tour of Europe, a trip that would take them through Holland, Germany, Italy, and into France. Prior to their departure, Harold Nicolson, a member of the British diplomatic service and longtime friend of the Woolfs, had conveyed to Leonard his apprehension about the couple's plan to visit Germany. The foreign office, Nicolson explained, believed that Germany was no longer safe for Jews (L. Woolf, Downhill 185). Prompted by Nicolson's concerns, Leonard talked to Ralph Wigram, an official in the foreign office, who

said that it was quite true that the F.O. advised Jews not to go to Germany, and officially he had to give me that advice. But privately and as a friend, he could say that he thought it nonsense, and that I should not hesitate to go to Germany. The only thing which I ought to be careful about was not to get mixed up in any Nazi procession or public ceremony. (186)

Wigram's words apparently reassured Leonard, for soon after their conversation, he and Virginia departed for Europe. They entered Bonn on 9 May and promptly got "mixed up" in a long procession of Nazi supporters who had gathered to greet the Reich commander Goering—precisely

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the kind of procession that Wigram had told them to avoid. Here is how Virginia describes it in her diary:

We were chased across the [Rhine] by Hitler (or Goering) had to pass through ranks of children with red flags. . . . Banners stretched across the street "the Jew is our enemy" "There is no place for Jews in—." So we whizzed along until we got out of range of the docile hysterical crowd. Our obsequiousness gradually turning to anger. Nerves rather frayed. (4: 311)

Three days later, having left Bonn for Heidelberg, she notes: "The Hitler feeling relaxed, though every village had a painted sign 'Die Juden sind hier unwunscht' [Jews are not wanted here]" (4: 312). In the month preceding this entry and her trip to Bonn, Virginia writes pointedly, both in her diary and in letters to friends, about fascism and Hitler's increasing power.1 However, only briefly does she express any concern about the potential belligerence of the Nazis if Leonard were to be identified as Jewish during the course of their travels. Writing to Margaret Llewelyn Davies on 28 April, she says: "we have got a letter from prince Bismarck in our pocket, as people say we might be unpopular as we are Jews" (Letters 5: 388).2 Two weeks earlier, detailing in her diary her and Leonard's plans for their trip, she comments, "it is almost now settled that we shall drive through Holland, concealing Leonard's nose, to Rome; & so back" (4: 298). And in a letter of 18 April, she tells her childhood friend Violet Dickinson: "as we go through Germany, and as Leonard's nose is so long and hooked, we rather suspect that we shall be flayed alive," adding blithely, "but if not, I hope some day we shall meet again" (5: 385).

Virginia's response to the Goering procession has long intrigued her biographers, most recently Julia Briggs, who characterizes Virginia's experiences in Germany as a crucial catalyst in the development of *Three Guineas* (312).³ However, it is Virginia's references to Leonard's nose, her casual shorthand for Leonard's Jewishness, on which I want to pause. Although at first glance the references seem to be no more than simple clichés, antisemitic platitudes out of keeping with the sophistication we associate with Woolf's writing, such platitudes figure repeatedly in both her published and unpublished work, a trend long recognized in Woolf scholarship.⁴ In the following pages I suggest that the use of such platitudes is in fact a complex matter of style for Woolf and that the method by which she works through this style ultimately defines the antisemitism

of her texts. In other words, in Woolf's work antisemitism is not simply an attitude toward Jews but rather a technique—what I shall describe shortly, and perhaps counterintuitively, as a form of modernist manners.⁵ I will then show how revisions Woolf made to her portraits of Jews, particularly in her 1938 short story "The Duchess and the Jeweller," echo a growing public anxiety about the expression of anti-Jewish sentiments in 1930s British and American society, an anxiety exacerbated in Britain by England's escalating conflict with Germany. Finally, I will argue that Woolf's portraits of Jews are in line with broader attempts in Britain to "civilize" traditional antisemitic discourses. By civilize, I do not mean that antisemitic attitudes in the 1930s are eliminated or even diminished, but rather that discomfort about the prominence of virulent hate rhetoric in Britain's famously "civil" society gives rise to more subtle and rhetorically complex expressions of antisemitism, a development perfectly in keeping with Woolf's own preoccupation with indirect speech, ultimately the foundation of what we might call a modernist etiquette.

"Jewish" noses in

"The Duchess and the Jeweller"

Aside from the short sketch "Jews," "The Duchess and the Jeweller" is Woolf's only published piece fully devoted to a Jewish character.⁶ The story's protagonist is Oliver Bacon, whose work takes him from the East End in London, the Jewish ghetto, to a shop off Bond Street, where he establishes himself as Britain's "richest jeweller" (249). Bacon's most eminent patron is the Duchess of Lambourne, who, at the climax of the tale, offers Bacon her jewels in exchange for £,20,000, the sum she needs to pay off a gambling debt. Both Bacon and the Duchess know the jewels are fake; nonetheless, Bacon agrees to buy them, hoping that his deed and discretion will give him access to the aristocracy, and more specifically to the Duchess's daughter Diana, whose affections he hopes to win. Thematically, the story investigates the systems of exchange by which the British Empire maintains its wealth, power, and prestige. But the narrative also expresses Woolf's longstanding interest in the decline of the empire, a decline that she attributes in "The Duchess" to the presence of Jews in England, even as she suggests that Jews are necessary to sustain the illusion

of British imperial strength. In effect, it is the Jewish jeweler who allows the illusion of Britain's power to remain uneasily in play.

It is first through the image of the nose, an organ with which she is curiously preoccupied, that Woolf surreptitiously links Bacon's vocation and success as a jeweler with his status as a Jew. The scene quoted below occurs early in the text and describes what once had been a regular encounter between Bacon and his fellow jewelers:

When [Bacon] passed through the knots of jewellers who were discussing prices, gold mines, diamonds, reports from South Africa, one of them would lay a finger to the side of his nose and murmur, "Hum-m-m," as he passed. It was no more than a murmur; no more than a nudge on the shoulder, a finger on the nose, a buzz that ran through the cluster of jewellers in Hatton Garden on a hot afternoon—oh, many years ago now! But still he felt it purring down his spine, the nudge, the murmur that meant, "Look at him—young Oliver, the young jeweller—there he goes." (248–49)

Woolf leaves oblique the precise meaning of the jeweler's gesture, the finger placed on the nose. Let me suggest three potential interpretations, the first of which is indicated by Bacon himself: 1. Bacon's fellow jeweler points to his own nose simply to indicate the arrival of an especially skilled and successful jeweler. 2. The gesture is the non-Jew's code or shorthand for Bacon's Jewishness, in essence a reference to what, in antisemitic discourse of the period, was frequently depicted as the Jews' most distinctive feature. When the jeweler points to his own nose he is informing his fellow non-Jewish jewelers that a Jew is in their midst.8 3. The jeweler's gesture indicates his awareness of Bacon's Jewish identity but also his admiration for the success of someone who, like himself and his fellow jewelers, is also Jewish. Woolf explicitly incorporates into the text only the first interpretation, an interpretation that might be read either as a projection of Bacon's own desire to be admired by others or, more insidiously, as a narrative foil designed to distract us from the second and third readings, that is, from seeing the nose exclusively as a sign of the Jew.

That Woolf attempts to obscure the Jewishness of her symbols is indicated by revisions she made to the original drafts of the story. In early versions she discusses the "dirty Jewish food" of Bacon's childhood and calls Bacon a "Jew boy." By the time the story was published in 1938,

she had cut all of the explicit references to Bacon's Jewish identity, along with the blatant stereotypes about Jews in the East End. Nonetheless, the stereotypes do not fully disappear. Woolf uses the scene quoted above to make us aware of the figural significance of the nose, directing us to it with a minute but crucial gesture, much in the same way that the jeweler himself indicates Bacon's presence to his fellow workers. Moments later, she connects the nose more specifically with Bacon, turning Bacon's own nose—now depicted grotesquely as an elephant's trunk, and then as a hog's snout—into a sign of his greed, disgruntlement, and, finally, sadness: 10

[H]e was the richest jeweller in England; but his nose, which was long and flexible, like an elephant's trunk, seemed to say by its curious quiver at the nostrils (but it seemed as if the whole nose quivered, not only the nostrils) that he was not satisfied yet; still smelt something under the ground further off. Imagine a giant hog in a pasture rich with truffles; after unearthing this truffle and that, it smells a bigger, a blacker truffle under the ground further off. . . . For was he not still a sad man, a dissatisfied man, a man who seeks something that is hidden . . .? (249)

This series of images of the nose allows Woolf both to retain and to make oblique the stereotypes of Jews that were present in the earlier versions of her story. 11 As Susan Dick notes, Woolf eliminated the more overtly troublesome descriptions at the request of her New York literary agent, Jacques Chambrun, who explained to her that her portrait of the Jewish Bacon would offend American readers (309). But Chambrun's comments did not radically alter Woolf's conception of the role of Jewishness in her story. Rather, they set into motion the metamorphosis of the text's blatant antisemitism into something more figural and more latent, a form of rhetoric that may appear to express, if not a wholly philosemitic attitude toward Jews, then at least Woolf's aesthetic and cultural fascination with Anglo-Jewish history and with ostensibly "Jewish" characteristics. 12 We shouldn't be surprised that antisemitism enters Woolf's work in such circuitous ways. In essence, Jewishness for writers of this period, and for the modernist writer in particular, is material to be shaped and reshaped; if we are going to understand the antisemitic stereotypes circulating in works like "The Duchess and the Jeweller," we must reconstruct Jewishness as Woolf herself reconstructed it, reading specifically for a Jewishness that. in its most provocative forms, can appear not to be lewish at all

In less extreme instances, this reconstructed, non-Jewish Jewishness is identifiable only as a Jewishness reinterpreted in Christian terms. Woolf employs such a formulation when she describes Bacon's devotion to his mother, "an old lady on the mantelpiece," a figure who signifies not only Bacon's own Jewish identity but also London's immigrant Jewish community in general: "And he stood beneath the picture of an old lady on the mantelpiece and raised his hands. 'I have kept my word,' he said, laying his hands together, palm to palm" (249). As Leena Kore Schröder has noted, the placement of Bacon's hands transforms his homage into a form of prayer (310). But Bacon's deportment here specifically suggests Christian piety rather than Jewish devotion, while at the same time reiterating, allegorically, a familiar theological narrative about Christianity's supersession over Judaism: it establishes Bacon, the now "Christianized" son, and even Christianity itself, as the progeny of a distinctly Jewish mother, a relationship in turn premised on the dialectical argument that to be not Jewish is to be Christian.

One of the most common notions about Jews circulating in Britain when Woolf was writing was that to be British, as Bryan Cheyette observes (paraphrasing Grace Aguilar), Jews had to "relocate . . . Judaism [to] the private sphere," embracing, in public life, the so-called "universalist values of . . . liberal culture" ("Other Self" 97). And yet, Cheyette notes, such values were never "entirely emptied of their particularist 'Christian' context" (98). The image of Bacon offering his "Christian" prayer in private, and to a Jewish rather than a Christian mother/Madonna, extends but also complicates this view, suggesting, on the one hand, that Jews must be "Christian" in private matters as well, but also, paradoxically, that any true metamorphosis into a British gentile is, for the Jewish Bacon, ultimately unachievable. Woolf's invocations of such standard narratives about Jewish conversion and Christian supersession gesture toward but also undermine a position frequently espoused by right-wing ideologues of the period such as J. H. Clarke and Joseph Banister: the belief that inherent dissimilarities between Jews and British gentiles make it impossible for Jews ever to integrate fully into British society. 13 Such an impossibility is suggested by the reappearance of Bacon's mother at the conclusion of the story, a reappearance that evokes for Bacon the memory of his own childhood in London's Jewish ghetto, thereby reinjecting into the text, through a series of indirect figures, Bacon's fundamental identity as a Jew:

"Forgive me, oh my mother!" he sighed, raising his hands as if he asked pardon of the old woman in the picture. And again he was a little boy in the alley where they sold dogs on Sunday. "For," he murmured, laying the palms of his hands together, "it is to be a long week-end." (253)

In other words, Jewishness here emerges as a kind of spectral counterpoint to Bacon's quasi-Christian gesture of "laying his hands together, palm to palm," a vaguely neurotic return of his Jewish background, which Woolf inserts in the text through a composite of stereotypes about Jews and East End commerce that circulated during the early twentieth century: (1) Jews stole items, dogs in particular, from the wealthy, only to resell them in the markets of the East End, and (2) the Jewish practice of holding markets on Sunday was itself an indication of the Jews' disregard for the Christian values of Britain and hence of British civilization. What Woolf offers in this final scene is thus, to use Freud's term, a kind of screen memory of Jewish identity, one that indirectly expresses or manipulates popular fears about, and a symptomatic rhetoric of, Jewish difference and subversion.

In fact, it is in Woolf's writerly reconfiguration of such cultural narratives about Jewish assimilation, narratives that are meticulously submerged in Woolf's story, that we find the most virulent forms of antisemitism operating. We can see this in Woolf's most central image of the text, the Duchess's jewels, which, as Laura María Lojo Rodríguez argues, signify a fundamental conflict between aesthetics and commodity culture.14 But this image also automatically invokes a number of highly charged political rhetorics surrounding the production and circulation of jewels during this period, rhetorics that implicated Jews in both economic and revolutionary plots to control Britain. In short, the jewels are connected to narratives about the Jews' potential for revolt, narratives in turn linked, in the public domain, to concerns at the turn of the century about the Jews' involvement with the Boer War and, later, with the diamond trade. 15 In books and newspapers, writers such as J. A. Hobson repeatedly contended that the Boer War was waged for, and manipulated by, Jews, whose control over the African diamond mines was said to be undisputed (232-33). The Jews, Hobson argued, were using "[British] public policy [in Africa] for private gain" (qtd. in Feldman 265). The frequency and virulence of such claims increased rapidly in the 1920s and 30s with the rise of protofascist groups such as the British Fascisti and the Imperial Fascist League, both of which had a steady influence in London's East End. These groups were

commonly found "preaching anti-Semitism, recruiting, and selling their publications, *The Lion* and *The Fascist*" (Snaith 626 citing Durham 27). As Anna Snaith and others have pointed out, Woolf was well aware of these activities and of the anti-Jewish rhetoric that surrounded them, a point underscored by a number of Woolf's diary entries during the 1930s (Snaith 627, 629–30). 16

Let me suggest some of the ways in which this rhetoric might be at work in Woolf's text, and how it gets transferred into the structure of her language. On the one hand we have the very explicit references to the South African diamond trade; recall the crowd of jewelers I described before and the gesture they make as Bacon passes by: "when [Bacon] passed through the knots of jewelers in the hot evening who were discussing prices, gold mines, diamonds, reports from South Africa, one of them would lay a finger to the side of his nose and murmur, 'Hum-m-m,' as he passed." Here the text performs a metonymical movement through the phrases "the gold mines, diamonds" and "reports from South Africa" to the nose of the Jew, a movement facilitated by a series of popular antisemitic claims, such as Hobson's contention that the Jews both desired and caused the Boer War. 17 In the descriptions of the commodity produced by the mines, the jewels themselves, we find a second chain emerging: Bacon, we are told, keeps his jewels in steel safes, each of which is lined with "a pad of deep crimson velvet" (250), which sheathes the jewels. Woolf then focuses on Bacon's response to the jewels, a response ostensibly sparked by their brilliance: "Tears!' said Oliver, looking at the pearls. 'Heart's blood!' he said, looking at the rubies" (250). Bacon's depiction of the rubies as "heart's blood" makes the crimson velvet that encases the jewels an image of spilled blood, possibly suggesting, once again, the bloodshed of the Boer War. 18 The violence connoted by this second chain resurges dramatically with Bacon's description of his diamonds: "'Gunpowder!' he continued, rattling the diamonds so that they flashed and blazed. 'Gunpowder enough to blow up Mayfair—sky high, high, high!" (250). 19 Bacon's outcry extends beyond his own desire to demolish Mayfair-indeed, what Bacon evokes with the word "Gunpowder" is the infamous Gunpowder plot of 1605, a scheme formulated by 13 Catholic royalists, including Guy Fawkes and Robert Catesby, to destroy London's parliament, the Anglican monarchy, and more broadly, British forms of governance. In this second metonymic chain—"crimson," "blood," "gunpowder" —cultural or political beliefs about the threat of Jewishness in British history and society are

again invoked, just at the fringe of the text's figural language, just enough to create what Woolf's fellow modernist, Djuna Barnes, in a 1935 letter, calls the "atmosphere" of the Jew.

That there is a series of implicit narratives about Jewish conspiracy operating within the text is again reinforced by one of Woolf's many revisions. In the published version of the story Woolf describes Bacon's relationship with the Duchess as follows: "They were friends, yet enemies; he was master, she was mistress" (251). But in a draft she writes: "They were conspirators; yet enemies; and he was the master; but she was the mistress too" (Unpublished draft 7). Indeed, conspiracy, and specifically Jewish conspiracy, is finally the basic term occluded by the text and tacitly evoked by images of blood and revolution. All three, Woolf's allusions seem to indicate—albeit in the most ostensibly delicate or genteel fashion—will be the product of the Jews' assimilation into Britain.²⁰

But let us not read Woolf's deletion of "conspirators" merely as a sign of good manners, for the figural chains by which she ultimately evokes conspiracy in the text—the "finger on the nose," "prayer," "gold," "diamonds," "war," "blood," "gunpowder"—are in fact more appropriate for the structural and stylistic technique of the modernist writer than the terms conspirators or conspiracy could ever be on their own. Indeed, Jewishness itself, for Woolf, is effectively already a category of style, one that is productive precisely because of its vague, sinister, but also pervasive quality, all the things that belong to the antisemitic stereotype of the secret, invasive Jewish presence in Britain. That is why she finds the explicit antisemitic images, which were so troubling to her American editor, wholly expendable, but not the antisemitic structure of her language, the metonymic links and chains that ultimately provide the foundation of her Jewish characters, not only in "The Duchess and the Jeweller" but in her diaries as well.

To illustrate further, let me pause briefly on Woolf's 1939 essay "A Sketch of the Past," focusing particularly on her transformation of Victorian sensibilities, and the period's obsession with manners and civility, into a stylistic tool or technique. This transformation sets the stage for Woolf's highly stylized, or distinctly "civil," configurations of antisemitism in "The Duchess," configurations that are shaped not primarily by her disdain for Jews but rather by her interest in form, and more specifically by her preoccupation with oblique modes of speech.

Victorian manners, modernist methods

"A convention in writing is not much different from a convention in manners," writes Woolf in her 1924 essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" (110). Fifteen years later, in "A Sketch of the Past," she returns to this claim, ruminating on middle-class Victorian society's preoccupation with proper manners and the impact of this preoccupation on her own behavior:

About 4–4:30 Victorian society exerted its pressure. . . . The pressure of society was now very strong. It created that "manner" which [Vanessa and I] both still use. . . . We both learned the rules of the Victorian game of manners so thoroughly that we have never forgotten them. We still play the game. It is useful; it has its beauty, for it is founded upon restraint, sympathy, unself-ishness—all civilized qualities. It is helpful in making something seemly and human out of raw odds and ends. (128–29)

Woolf's description of the "Victorian game of manners" is now decisively aesthetic. Indeed, her reminiscences become a platform for discussing her own narrative method: she attributes to this game of manners the "sidelong approach" of her conduct and writing, a style that she both condemns for its excessive "suavity" and "politeness" and praises for its "seemly" or civil qualities:

But the Victorian manner is perhaps—I am not sure—a disadvantage in writing. When I re-read my old Common Reader articles I detect it there. I lay the blame for their suavity, their politeness, their sidelong approach, to my tea-table training. I see myself handing plates of buns to shy young men and asking them, not directly and simply about their poems and their novels, but whether they like cream as well as sugar. On the other hand, this surface manner allows one to say a great many things which would be inaudible if one marched straight up and spoke out. (129)

Woolf's concluding remark, that Victorian decorum "allows one to say a great many things," points to an important trend in her work, even despite the disdain she exhibits for the suavity of this genteel aesthetic. As Andrew McNeillie notes, "Woolf always tended to prefer obliquity: it was part and parcel of her aesthetic to do so" (19). Indeed, by 1910, in her brief but

provocative essay "Mrs. Gaskell," Woolf was not only already developing this distinctly aesthetic view of obliqueness but was also using it specifically to illustrate a new, modern method of storytelling, a method that in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" she famously classifies as "Georgian" (95). Ruminating on both "the cant and clutter" of Edwardian writers and her own "modern" technique, she says of Edwardian novelists that they "left nothing out that they knew how to say. . . . Our ambition," she explains, "is to put nothing in that need not be there" ("Mrs. Gaskell" 341). Such remarks prompt a seemingly counterintuitive claim: that by the time Woolf finished "A Sketch of the Past," she had in fact already fully conceptualized Victorian social forces and pressures, not simply in terms of style but as a distinctly modern, even effectively modernist, mode of expression. In essence, social behavior is transformed into writerly technique.

How, then, does this technique appear in Woolf's writerly practice? That is, precisely how does Woolf's observation of society move from the parlor—the realm of social behavior—to the page? To address this question, let me turn first to a series of sketches of the Jewish aristocrat Victor Rothschild that Woolf composed during the period 1933–35, sketches that illuminate her recurrent modification of the same structures and tropes of Jewishness that ultimately end up in "The Duchess." In these earlier sketches we see her describing Jewish eating practices, and what she classifies as distinctly Jewish behavior, in order to create a narrative about Jewish-gentile relations. Particularly significant are the ways in which she manipulates references to beef and pork to depict Jewishness as vulgar and distinctly "un-English," relegated to the ghetto.

In 1933, in a diary entry dated Thursday 23 November, Woolf depicts Rothschild as being "too butcher like in his red flesh, too thick cut, underdone, assertive" (4: 189–90). She then recounts a recent visit to the Rothschilds' home, noting that Rothschild continually fondled his wife's arm as he spoke and that he inserted Woolf's name in conversation too frequently for her liking. Using a chain of metonymies—"human flesh," "meat," "blood," "violence"—Woolf conveys her impression of the coarseness of Rothschild's behavior and of his body. She characterizes Rothschild's flesh as red by evoking the blood-soaked clothing of the butcher's trade and the butcher's blood-soaked beef, which is now figuratively equated with Rothschild's own "red," butchered body. More than a year later, in an entry dated 21 July 1934, Woolf again describes him as meat: "Then V.

[Rothschild] came in, a slab of beefsteak, fat, thick, red lipped, in his open shirt" (4: 227). Here she merges the image of Rothschild's bloodied body with an image of him as satiated consumer; his bloodied lips indicate that he has only recently devoured his meal. Through this minute shift in focus, Woolf not only re-emphasizes the crudeness of Rothschild's conduct but also suggests that his behavior is naturally violent, more akin to a predator feeding on its prey than to an aristocrat.²²

But unlike the revolutionary violence indicated by Bacon's reactions to his jewels in "The Duchess," Rothschild's violence seems emptied of any particular political or historical meaning. It reads instead as a purely descriptive account of his habits and modes of conduct, or more precisely as a modernist version of an ethnographic record of "natural" Jewish behavior.²³ I borrow the term "ethnographic record" from Nancy Bentley, who describes the kind of attention to social customs that we see in late nineteenth-century novels as an act of "master[ing] manners," one "comparable to the enterprise of writing an ethnography" (2). In such cases, she writes, "Social manners are recast as ethnographic data" (76). Woolf's portraits of Rothschild indicate that she too was "master[ing] manners," specifically Jewish manners, English manners, and the apparent differences between them, an approach that would later inform "The Duchess." Indeed, Woolf's descriptions of Rothschild illustrate both her views of the English leisure class and the failure of the Jew-now demoted to the position of butcher, despite his actual wealth—to imitate the ethos of that class.

British ethnography and Woolfian technique

In fact, this correspondence between table manners and Jewish identity in Woolf's work is informed directly by early twentieth-century British ethnographies of London's Jewish East End and by concerns in this literature about the cultural significance of Jewishness in Britain, concerns prompted initially by the large-scale immigration of Jews into Britain in the 1880s and later by the threat of their assimilation into mainstream British society. Following a description of some of the trends that characterize these ethnographies, I will suggest that Woolf ultimately transforms the ethnographer's fascination with Jewish manners and mannerisms, including patterns of speech, eating habits, and religious rituals, into an aesthetic principle that belies the apparent simplicity of her portraits of Rothschild and ultimately her portrait of Bacon.²⁴

The most influential of these ethnographic studies was Charles Booth's Life and Labour of the People in London. 25 Booth began researching economic and social conditions in London in response to "a survey of working-class districts taken by the Marxist Social Democratic Federation" which was serialized in the Pall Mall Gazette in 1885 (Fried and Elman xvii). His initial goal was to prove that the Marxist survey, which claimed that "25 percent of the working class was poor," had overstated British levels of poverty; instead, he found that the number of poor in Britain was closer to 35 percent of the population (xxiv). Booth's publications combined statistical data on East London collected by his team of researchers, charts and detailed maps of the area, essays on local institutions and social relations affecting the poor, and a series of sections on special subjects, which included the sweating system, 26 the changing demographics of the population, and the Jewish community. The Jewish section was written by Beatrice Potter, a long-time friend of Virginia's family.

Booth's study was followed by a number of works by other authors focused more specifically on London's Jews, including C. Russell and H. S. Lewis, William Evans-Gordon, and John Foster Fraser. These texts surveyed Jewish labor practices in the East End, Jewish family life, gender relations in the Jewish community, Jewish religious rituals, and non-Jewish perspectives on Jews. They have received scant attention from scholars of British ethnography, who have tended to focus primarily on Booth's more popular and widely studied analyses of the East End. I would like to look at one such work, Frank Hird's The Cry of the Children, which strikingly illustrates the premises underlying ethnographic studies of the period, especially in regard to the evaluation of immigrant Jews. It also eschews statistics for anecdotes and longer narratives about Jewish social institutions, labor conditions, and domestic relations in the Jewish home. Thus it effectively blurs the boundaries between fictional and nonfictional depictions of Jews, serving as a kind of literary precursor to texts such as "The Duchess" even as it promotes an ostensibly scientific, objective rhetoric about Anglo-Jewish life on which writers like Woolf will, as late as the 1930s, continue to draw.

Hird focuses on the employment of children in Jewish-owned businesses. He begins his exposé, however, with a discussion of Jewish employees, who, he explains, are commonly subjected to brutally low wages. "As a workman," he writes, "the foreign Jew is to East London what the Chinaman is to San Francisco" (62), an analogy intended to indicate his

sympathy for Jews and more generally for the plight of laborers who, over the course of his study, ironically become the victims of iniquitous Jewish labor practices. Indeed, Hird asserts that "with very few exceptions, the middlemen for whom . . . women and children [in the East End] work . . . are Jews" (63). Ultimately he argues that Jews are naturally inclined to be employers, a tendency that prompts him to describe Jews as morally "debased" (72).

Hird's observations are shaped not simply by his own need to distinguish Jews from non-Jews but also by a growing desire in the society at large to make Jews and Jewish traits more visible, a phenomenon referenced in Woolf's use of "Jewish" noses and other traits. This trend stemmed largely from fears about the increasing assimilation of Jews into mainstream British culture and from the popular notion that although Jews were essentially different from non-Jews, they were beginning to "pass" as English, a development that many saw as a threat to the identity and social well-being of the British nation. The tendency to accentuate Jewish characteristics—to make Jewishness more clearly visible—can be found operating in Hird's notes on the social customs of married Jewish women, which he casts not simply as different but as hideous, a description that turns Jewish religious practice into a more blatant sign of the "preponderance of Jews" in Britain and, by extension, of Jewish invasion:

The preponderance of Jews of every nationality in certain parts of the East End is so great that particular quarters have really become Ghettos. Jewish names appear over every shop-door; inscriptions in Yiddish show where "kosher" meat may be bought; the women crowding the pavements for the most part have their shaven heads covered with light brown wigs, from beneath which a few strands of hair struggle hideously—the wigs proclaim that they are married. (61)

Ultimately, Hird equates Jewish customs—in this case, the wearing of "light brown wigs" to indicate marriage—with lack of hygiene. The East End, he continues, is a "little world of Israels [sic], where the Poles, Armenians, Russians, and Germans of the faith live . . . in an environment of dirt indescribable" (61).

Indeed, the unclean qualities of the Jews, connected not only to the conditions in which they live but also to the people themselves, is a theme

that recurs throughout Hird's work. It can be seen, for instance, in his description of a Jewish workman's home that he has recently visited: "A ground floor, consisting of two small rooms, of a four-roomed house, in a street pestilential with decaying vegetables and all the refuse of its thriftless and dirty inhabitants, was occupied by a furniture-polisher and his family" (65-66). In urban ethnographies of the period such a preoccupation with Jewish dirt and decay was entirely conventional. As Douglas Mao notes, by the late 1890s it was increasingly common in poverty studies to find the physical condition of the bodies of individuls-here Jewish immigrants—serving as a figure for the body of the nation; this was due in large part to fears of deterioration surrounding the Boer War, when questions about the well-being of England were rekindled in the wake of British military defeats and amidst rising concerns about the "poor health of [Britain's] soldiers" (31). In short, urban ethnography tended to project onto the immigrant population much more general anxieties about Britain's military and imperial decline.

But what is most provocative about the work of researchers such as Hird is not their claims about Jewish behavior at all, but rather the frequent juxtaposition of supposedly Jewish communal practices—what Russell and Lewis attribute to "tribal instinct" (40)—with British rituals and customs, a link that ultimately turns Englishness itself into the ethnographers' subject of investigation. This unintentional shift in emphasis becomes especially clear in Booth's studies of the poverty level of East End streets, which he arranges according to colors, using pink, blue, and purple to designate distinct economic classes. Booth's investigators often had trouble deciding which color to assign the streets they had visited, a dilemma that arose primarily because researchers tended to interpret Jewish domestic arrangements in terms of non-Jewish practices. "Again difficulty of telling by appearance whether some of the small Jewish streets should be pink, purple, or light blue," writes Woolf's half-brother, George Duckworth, one of Booth's principle investigators, lamenting the problems facing Booth's teams of examiners (qtd. in Englander, "Booth's Jews" 307). Another investigator, Inspector Drew of the Stepney Green police department, observes that "as far as outward appearances are concerned nearly all the streets belonged to the 'pink' category." However, he notes that "in the Jewish ho. with its greater crowding there is no china tea pot with an evergreen plant in the front window on a round table which in North London used to be the sure mark of a 'pink' character" (qtd. in

Englander 307). Later, Booth's researchers describe a series of streets as Jewish not because they see any Jews but rather because the gardens that surround the homes show few "signs of care or order or flowers" (qtd. in Englander 308). Their conclusion makes sense only if one assumes that the English would never neglect their gardens—that cultivated gardens are, in fact, a sign of Englishness and, moreover, of English civility, now threatened by the "dirt" and vulgarity of the Jewish immigrant population.

Woolf was certainly familiar with many of these studies. According to Anna Snaith,

Woolf researched Victorian attitudes to nineteenth-century London poverty, but also had first-hand knowledge of the "investigators" who studied London slums, since her half-brother, George Duckworth, worked between 1892 and 1902 as secretary to Charles Booth while he was writing *Life and Labour of the People in London*... and the Booths were close family friends.²⁸ (622)

"Georgie spent the night in the slums," Woolf writes in an early diary entry dated 8 May 1897 (qtd. in Snaith 622). Her acquaintance with ethnography is further suggested by a passing reference in *The Voyage Out*, where Terence, one of the protagonists, exclaims, "No one dreams of reading this kind of thing now—antiquated problem plays, harrowing descriptions of life in the east end" (292).

Carey Snyder, in her thoughtful analysis of *The Voyage Out*, argues that Woolf's "tool for reshaping character [in the book] is the ethnographic perspective that turns an estranging eye on English customs and subjects English characters to the shock of the unfamiliar" (98). She contends that Woolf effectively "brought anthropology 'home' . . . by applying techniques designed for the far-flung subjects of Empire to English character and culture" (93). To this I would add that in her portraits of Rothschild, Woolf "appl[ies] techniques designed for the far-flung subjects of Empire to [Jewish] character and culture." Moreover, her descriptions of Rothschild provide the foundation—an ethnographic source material, so to speak—for her later portrait of Bacon, a link that will become clearer as we return to Woolf's comments on Rothschild's meat-like and butcherlike body and to the connections she draws between Rothschild and one meat in particular, pork.

Reimagining Rothschild

Writing to her nephew Quentin Bell barely three weeks after her visit with the Rothschilds, Woolf again evokes meat, this time using pork rather than beefsteak as her chief figure, and using it explicitly to emphasize Rothschild's identity as a Jew. The letter opens with an account of a cocktail party given to celebrate Rothschild's engagement to Barbara Hutchinson, a longtime friend of the Woolfs. Woolf concludes the letter with her sister Vanessa's assessment of Jews, which seems at first glance to be only marginally connected to her observations of the party itself: "But [Vanessa] will tell you she didn't like the flavour of the Jew. Like raw pork" (5: 258). Vanessa's curious comment not only echoes Woolf's recurrent descriptions of Rothschild's meat-like qualities but, since kosher law prohibits the eating of pork, it also suggests that Rothschild, as a "pork-flavoured" Jew, has ceased to be fully Jewish. Indeed, we can read Vanessa's statement much as we read Woolf's comments on the apparently uncivilized behavior of Rothschild in her diary: as a condensed version of more elaborate descriptions of Jewish character circulating in the culture at large, descriptions that in 1933 and 1934 Woolf herself was still developing.

Such descriptions illustrate Woolf's penchant for affixing stock phrases and images to the characters she describes, phrases and images that she continually recrafts until she has conveyed what, in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," she depicts as the life or spirit of each character-in Rothschild's case, a distinctly nonaristocratic, hence "fleshy," vulgarity. Significantly, these "Jewish" sketches of Rothschild recall not only the rhetorical method by which she both suggests and occludes the idea of conspiracy and revolution in "The Duchess" but also the kind of figural metamorphoses that we see in the work of writers like James Joyce, who, in Ulysses, constructs elaborate metonymic chains to describe the epicurean and sexual desires of modernism's most celebrated Jewish character, Leopold Bloom.³⁰ Tracing the images and phrases she associates with Rothschild, we find the following: repeated references to Rothschild's wealth, to his acquisition of rubies and diamonds, and to his Jewishness. These topoi closely resemble the constellation of tropes that Woolf develops in "The Duchess" and point to her ongoing experiments with, and reuse of, specific figurative schemata. For instance, twice in the span of five months, she comments on Rothschild's financial status, referring to

him in a 1933 letter to Vita Sackville-West as "the richest young man in Europe" (5: 198) and again in a letter of the same year to Ethel Smyth as "the richest young man in England" (5: 241–42), phrases that are echoed in her depiction of Bacon as "the richest jeweller in Britain" (249). In fact, much as Bacon's prestige and success as a jeweler are complicated by the specter of his Jewishness in "The Duchess," so Rothschild's wealth and Jewish identity tend to collide in Woolf's sketches, undermining his aristocratic status and bearing. In other cases, "Jewishness," "jewels," and "wealth" serve more directly as synonyms for one another. 31

That Rothschild's Jewish identity merits comment at all is underscored by Woolf in her letter to Smyth; before describing Rothschild as "the richest young man in England," Woolf bluntly calls him "the Jew," an ostensibly casual but nonetheless jarring reference that effectively demarcates and thus undercuts his wealth: "we sat up till one at the Hutchinsons to celebrate Barbara's engagement to Victor Rothschild, the Jew, the richest young man in England" (242). More complex and intriguing is a brief and characteristically oblique remark that Woolf makes in her letter to Sackville-West. "[H]ere's the richest young man in Europe come to dine on peas and bacon in order to pass the Camels eye!" (199). Thematically, the remark can be read in two related ways: either Woolf is suggesting that Rothschild is traversing class boundaries by eating "peas and bacon"class slumming—or that his eating bacon is an attempt to pass as fully English, an Englishness here characterized as distinctly not-Jewish through Woolf's allusion to pork. This elliptical comment—it hardly matters whether it is read in terms of class or kosher law-establishes Rothschild as an outsider, or more precisely as one who, like Bacon in "The Duchess," trespasses in a milieu he cannot wholly or successfully inhabit. However, it is Woolf's quasi-secular reformulation of the biblical adage "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Matt. 19.24) that most resonates with "The Duchess." Much as in that story she reconstitutes political truisms to suggest the invasive and violent quality of Bacon's Jewishness, so here she recomposes the elements "to go through," "camel," and "eye" into a strange new figure—"to pass the camels eye." It is through this highly modernist, even Joycean, process of condensation, fragmentation, and rearrangement of scripture that Woolf emphasizes Rothschild's inability to "pass," and more specifically, characterizes his Jewishness: a trait that, in New Testament terms, itself prohibits Rothschild from entering "the

kingdom of God," a "kingdom" that Woolf, in her cursory remark, transforms into the distinctly secular English "peas and bacon."

Careful inspection of the figurative patterns in Woolf's descriptions of Rothschild and Bacon confirm how closely related the two portraits are. Even when she is not transporting the specific content of images from her descriptions of Rothschild into "The Duchess," she is very often transposing the form. We find an example of this second kind of transposition by comparing her brief description of Rothschild's book collection with her portrait of Bacon's collection of jewels, an instance ostensibly unrelated to her use of food metaphors. Of Rothschild's books, she writes: "[s]o in the library: a steel bookcase packed with first editions, each sealed in a red morocco case" (Diary 4: 228). Bacon, we recall, stores his jewels in steel safes, each one covered with a "pad of deep crimson velvet" (250), a detail that simultaneously parallels Rothschild's steel bookcase and the red morocco case in which Rothschild keeps his first editions. She then notes that Rothschild has "thousands of pounds worth [of books], bought since last year," underscoring the financial negotiations in which Rothschild, like Bacon, participates. Woolf's refiguring of such structures exemplified by the transformation of steel bookcase into steel safe and books into jewels—is represented most powerfully by her comments, in a 1935 letter to her nephew Quentin Bell, about Barbara Hutchinson's first official appearance at Court:

Barbara was presented at Court last week, wearing all the rubies. So many and so heavy they had to fix a panel on her side of white satin on which to wear them. But she said it was a great fraud. The King and Queen are rooms away; you no longer touch them; and the telephone broke down, and there wasn't a car to be had; and they handed thick ham sandwiches and slices of plum cake to all the Duchesses. She says she is a democrat for life. (5: 382)

Woolf's paraphrasing of Hutchinson's remarks addresses a theme that she explores at length in "The Duchess": the illusory power of the aristocracy. But here it is Barbara Hutchinson, the wife of a Jew rather than the Jew himself, who both participates in and reveals the illusion. Long before 1938, it seems, Woolf was already writing Bacon's story, albeit a story not yet formulated as Bacon's own.

In short, the Jewish Bacon in "The Duchess" derives from early eth-

nographic surveys of Anglo-Jews, common stereotypes about the "Jewish" nose, and Woolf's own portraits of Victor Rothschild. This narrative legacy is strikingly suggested by Woolf's resurrection of the figure of the camel in "The Duchess," where it conveys Bacon's alienation from England and his deep sense of dissatisfaction "with [his] lot":

[Bacon] swayed slightly as he walked, as the camel at the zoo sways from side to side when it walks along the asphalt paths laden with grocers and their wives eating from paper bags and throwing little bits of silver paper crumpled up on to the path. The camel despises the grocers; the camel is dissatisfied with its lot; the camel sees the blue lake and the fringe of palm trees in front of it. So the great jeweller, the greatest jeweller in the whole world, swung down Piccadilly, perfectly dressed, with his gloves, with his cane; but dissatisfied still. (249)

Most obviously, this scene offers a commentary on class: Bacon, the "greatest jeweller in the whole world," is reduced to the status of a camel in a zoo, while the Duchess, now figuratively flinging bits of silver paper onto the path, is demoted to the status of a grocer's wife. Inflecting this trope of the camel is, of course, Woolf's 1933 description of Rothschild, who is unable to "pass the Camels eye," but here Bacon has become the camel. More crucially, what the camel-like Bacon "sees" or longs for, a distinctly nonurban oasis, perhaps in North Africa, suggests, again through metonymy, the exoticism of the Jew. This oasis is provocatively rendered as if it were a picture postcard, sold on the street by grocers and grocers' wives; in fact, like the camel, and like Bacon himself, we see no more than the "fringe of palm trees" against the blue lake, as if our view has already been compromised, framed by a camera eye or cropped for consumption by those longing for a more exotic landscape. 33 The text incorporates an already manufactured image of the very landscape to which Bacon, now figured as a camel in a zoo, appears more "naturally" to belong. Edward Said speaks of texts that "import the foreign . . . in ways that bear the mark of the imperial enterprise" (189). Woolf's postcard-like image suggests that her dandified Bacon, "perfectly dressed with his gloves," belongs nowhere except as a piece of fiction, a fiction created by a twentieth-century, postimperialist vision of a desert-dwelling Jewishness that has already disappeared but can nonetheless be worked and reworked as quasi- or pseudohistorical and political material.34

Woolf's arrangement of the political leads me back, finally, to the elaborate relationship she constructs in "The Duchess" between Jewishness, revolution, and narrative. Her evocation of revolutionary action, suggested in "The Duchess" by the implied destruction of Mayfair, is in keeping with assertions that she had previously made about her own ability to take political action through writing. Six years before the publication of "The Duchess," in a diary entry dated Tuesday 16 February 1932, she says of the strength of the material she has gathered for what will eventually be *Three Guineas* that "I have collected enough powder to blow up St. Paul's" (4: 77). 35

That Woolf employs the figure of the dynamitard to describe her work should come as no surprise, given her engagement with the 1910 Post-Impressionist exhibit that Roger Fry organized in London and the political reactions it prompted, reactions that Woolf traces in her 1940 biography of Fry. As Jane Goldman notes, the exhibit was lambasted both by those in the academic art community and by reviewers in the popular press as a symptom of the decline of Western cultural values and, more specifically, of British forms of governance. Robert Ross, a reviewer for the Morning Post, even went so far as to equate Roger Fry and his fellow organizers with the conspirators of that same 1605 Gunpowder Plot that is obliquely referenced in "The Duchess":

A date more favorable . . . for revealing the existence of a wide-spread plot to destroy the whole fabric of European painting could hardly have been chosen. On Saturday accordingly the Press was invited to the Grafton Gallery—an admirable substitute for the vaults of Westminster—where the new Guido Fawkes, his colleagues, and alleged predecessors are exhibiting their gunpowder. Mr. Roger Fry, I regret to say, has acted the part of Catesby, while a glance at the names of the honorary committee reveal that more than one member of the Upper House is implicated. It is the way of modern conspiracies; we all join them sooner or later. To-day, which is the private view, it will be decided whether the anticipated explosion is going to take place.³⁷

Others, such as Ebenezer Wake Cook, linked the works displayed with the rise of anarchism: "These sickening aberrations could never have got a footing," he writes in a letter to the *Morning Post*, but for the "anti-pa-

triotic campaign in favor of anarchism and ultimate chaos" by the "Modernity' critics" (qtd. in Goldman 119). The Post-Impressionist painters themselves were commonly associated with the "window-smashing, picture-slashing, arson and bombs" of the suffrage movement (Spalding 139). Before it had opened, the exhibit and Post-Impressionism generally were already part of a broader rhetoric about English values, European politics, and conspiracy.

Whether or not Woolf read Ross's or Cook's responses to the exhibit is unclear. What is certain is that by the time of the 1910 Post-Impressionist exhibit, the language of political violence and conspiracy was in the air, and Woolf too would eventually utilize this language not only to represent Jewishness but also to turn the figure of the Jew into a kind of explosive style—destructive, capable of "window-smashing, picture-slashing, arson and bombs." In other words, the Jew is not only a distinctly political figure in her text, the dynamitard ready "to blow Mayfair—sky high, high, high!" he is also the site of modernist rupture, the vehicle through which modernist technique, like the Post-Impressionist exhibit as a whole, ultimately threatens to rip apart seemingly prosaic conventions and, in the case of "The Duchess," an otherwise prosaic plot.

Coda

Let me conclude by recalling Woolf's comments on the need to conceal Leonard's nose in the wake of the Nazis' growing animosity toward Jews. Her substitution of nose for Jew performs the very act it describes, concealing what must be hidden from the Germans while pointing directly to it, a gesture reminiscent of the jeweler in "The Duchess," who signifies Bacon's Jewishness with an oblique "finger on the nose." It is precisely this kind of double gesture that operates throughout "The Duchess," and by which the Jewishness of Woolf's primary protagonist is both obscured and ultimately exposed. More importantly, it is the means by which Woolf's often explicit antisemitism—the sort that we find in her letters and diaries—is transformed into a kind of genteel stylistic mannerism, a form that I would call civil antisemitism.

As historian Tony Kushner has shown, antisemitic sentiments did not dissipate in 1930s Britain, although their overt articulation was increasingly considered to be unseemly and "un-English," a change in perspective that Kushner attributes to expanding news coverage of the Nazis'

brutalization of Jews and to widespread attempts to distinguish the moral uprightness of the English—and by extension, Englishness itself—from German behavior. According to Kushner,

Purely "private" hostility to Jews was widespread, if the alarming findings of Mass-Observation are to be believed (with over 55% of the population feeling in some way antagonistic to Jews). However, this antipathy does not seem to be reflected as far as public behavior to Jews was concerned. A restraining factor was often at work, typified by the actions of a Scottish novelist and her friends, who attacked Jewish refugees in private "so that one can get it off one's chest and not say [it] in public." (Persistence 98)

Drawing on data provided by Mass-Observation interviews, Kushner concludes that by the early 1940s,

unfavorable attitudes to Jews declined by half.... There was thus a private form of censorship as regards antisemitic sentiments in the war, but how far was antisemitism unacceptable in society as a whole? There is no doubt that some change had taken place in the respectability of antisemitism in Britain by the war compared to a generation earlier.... [I]n 1939 an undergraduate at Cambridge could write that whilst many were still privately disdainful of Jews "it is almost blasphemy in the University to be openly antisemitic." (98–99)

This growing discomfort with overt expressions of antisemitism is curiously reflected in Harold Nicolson's 1945 assertion that "Although I loathe anti-semitism, I do dislike Jews." A writer like Woolf makes assertions such as Nicolson's into an art form, which should by no means diminish the political significance or ideological underpinnings of Woolf's work. Indeed, Woolf's experimentation, however sophisticated and subtle, is still in easy collusion with such genteely crude prejudice of the sort expressed by Nicolson—she is, ironically, a conventional antisemite, not because of her blatancy but precisely because of her discretion.

Such discretion, the foundation of a "civil" antisemitism, too often has been neglected by scholars because it doesn't appear to be as militant, hence as dangerous, as the hate mongering we associate with demagogues like Arnold White and Oswald Mosley. Yet it is a distinct and powerful discourse, one that needs to be understood as part of a broad history of

hate rhetoric in Britain, a history that informs modernism's representation of Jews, and hence modernist literary practice, in significant ways. The key for grappling with this discretion is to approach antisemitism as neither directly represented nor excluded from literary practice—and in fact, either of these extremes would be quite contrary to most modernisms—but rather as material and, given the fate of most material in the modernist work, ultimately as technique. Careful attention to the operation of this technique in Woolf's texts provides us with a crucial window into what contemporary critics have described alternately, and often paradoxically, both as modernism's troubling attitude toward Jews and as modernism's celebration of Jewish ideas and sensibilities, assessments that have animated discussion not only of Woolf's work but also of such writers as Djuna Barnes, T. S. Eliot, Henry James, and Mina Loy, all of whom have been viewed, at various junctures in literary history, as both antisemites and philosemites.

Notes

1. See for instance her diary entry of 17 April: "The Wigrams a little defensive about Jews in Germany" (4: 301). A few days later she quotes Ralph Wigram's description of Hitler and the German military:

Hitler very impressive; very frightening... Made speeches lasting 20 minutes with out a failure... The Germans... have enough airplanes ready to start to keep us under. But if they do kill us all? Well they will have their Colonies. (4: 304)

- 2. Davies was General Secretary of the Women's Co-operative Guild and had been a close friend of the Woolfs since the early years of World War I.
- 3. As Briggs notes, by January 1935, Woolf was already mapping connections between British debates over fascism and women's access to education. The trip to Germany reaffirmed her belief that disparities between men's and women's social and economic status in Britain could be linked to the broader structure of fascism. See also Hermoine Lee 667–68 and Mitchell Leaska 365–66.
- 4. See for instance Maren Linett, "The Jew in the Bath"; Phyllis Lassner; and Natania Rosenfeld.
- 5. For earlier analyses of the links between modernist experiments with form and modernist writers' attitudes toward Jews, see Maud Ellman, Marilyn

Reizbaum, and Anthony Julius, in particular Julius's claim that antisemitism "supplied part of the material out of which [Eliot] created poetry" (11). These scholars were among a crucial handful of critics responsible for promoting scholarship on what Linett calls modernism's Jews/Jewish modernisms (Introduction 249).

6. "Jews" was part of a notebook of sketches that Woolf kept in 1909. "The Duchess and the Jeweller" initially appeared in *Harper's Bazaar* in 1938 (London and New York) and was subsequently reprinted in *A Haunted House* and *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations in the text are from *The Complete Shorter Fiction*.

7. This point is also observed by Lassner in her analysis of the story's antisemitism; see in particular 132–33.

8. The finger pressed to the nose is a gesture that Charles Dickens, in *Oliver Twist*, explicitly equates with both Fagin's cunning as a thief and his Jewish identity. See in particular pages 125 and 289. Of course, Woolf's decision to name her Jewish protagonist Oliver suggests not only the title character of Dickens's book but also, by extension, Fagin. Woolf was an avid reader of Dickens throughout her life, and frequently comments on his work in her diaries. See for instance her entry of Tuesday 16 June 1925 (3: 31–32).

9. For more on the publication history and reception of the story, see Susan Dick, Laura María Lojo Rodríguez 117, Leena Kore Schröder 305, and Lassner 132–33.

10. In her emphasis on the figure of the nose Virginia follows Leonard, who, in his 1917 short story "Three Jews," illustrates the Jewishness of one of the story's protagonists with a description of the character's elephantine nose: "You couldn't mistake [the man] for anything but a Jew," writes Leonard:

Clever, cunning grey eyes, gold pince-nez, and a nose, by Jove, Sir, one of the best, one of those noses, white and shiny, which, when you look at it full face, seems almost flat on the face, but immensely broad, curving down. . . . And side face, it was colossal; it stood out like an elephant's trunk. (11)

The story appears along with Virginia's "The Mark on the Wall" in Two Stories.

11. In one of Woolf's more striking revisions to the story, she changes her Jewish protagonist's Hebraic sounding name, Isidore Theodoric, to Oliver Bacon, a pun referencing a central tenet of kosher law, the Jewish prohibition against eating pork. That Woolf was aware of such laws is indicated by a letter

she sent to her childhood teacher Janet Case in June 1912, recounting an evening that she spent with Leonard's mother, Marie Woolf:

[S]uch a tea party at Putney.

"A sandwich, Miss Stephen—or may I call you Virginia?"

"What? Ham sandwiches for tea?"

"Not Ham: potted meat. We don't eat Ham or bacon or Shellfish in this house."

"Not Shellfish? Why not shellfish?"

"Because it says in the Scriptures that they are unclean creatures, and our Mr. Josephs at the synagogue—and—"

It was queer—. (1:502-03)

- 12. This paradox is reflected in the very disparate critical reactions to Woolf's depiction of Bacon. Some, like Rodríguez, assume, almost casually, that antisemitism is an axiomatic feature of "The Duchess and the Jeweller" (116). Others, like Schröder, see Woolf's portrait of Bacon as compassionate enough to rouse our sympathies: "We cannot help but feel sorry for the emotionally lonely jeweler" (310).
- 13. See for instance Clarke x.
- 14. Rodríguez interprets the jewels both metaphorically, as "a symbol of secular aesthetic value" (125)—that is, as art detached from the "constraints of church, court, and state" (122) and produced for art's sake—and economically, as an aesthetic object the value of which comes from the "commodification of beauty" (127). "The Duchess and the Jeweller," writes Rodríguez, "exemplifies Woolf's ambiguous and complex attitude and relationship to the mass market and the consideration of art as a commodity" (121).
- 15. That the diamond industry informs Woolf's understanding of Jewish forms of labor and, by extension, Jewish character traits and essences, may be attributable to her encounters with her mother-in-law's family, who were diamond merchants in Amsterdam (Schröder 325n7). Amsterdam is mentioned in "The Duchess" as one of the places where Bacon goes to learn his trade (248). The extent of Woolf's specific knowledge of the South African diamond industry can only be surmised. We do know that information on South Africa's diamond mines was available at the British Empire Exhibit of 1924 and that Woolf attended and wrote about the exhibit: see for instance her 1924 essay "Thunder at Wembley."
- 16. See for instance Woolf's entry of 4 September 1935, in which she describes the pervasiveness of fascist propaganda in London: "Writings chalked all over the walls. 'Don't fight for foreigners. Britain should mind her own business.'

Then a circle with a symbol in it. Fascist propaganda, L. said. Mosley active again" (4: 337). Also see her entry of 24 November 1936, in which she notes, on the seat of a passing car, a copy of *The Blackshirt*, one of the more popular fascist newspapers of the period (5: 36). "Woolf," writes Snaith, understood

the transition from the racial analogies used to describe London slums and their inhabitants, to the racial hierarchies that underpinned eugenics, fascism, and the reactions to the growing immigrant population in London. (632)

- 17. As Tony Kushner explains, the "Jews involved in South Africa were seen not as individuals acting in self-interest, but as a cohort manipulating international events" (*Persistence* 12).
- 18. In the published version of the story, the gems sheathed in velvet are described as "safe, shining, cool, yet burning, eternally, with their own compressed light" (250). In an early draft, Woolf depicts the gems as "burning with their own coagulated light," reinforcing the jewels' connection with blood (Unpublished draft 5).
- 19. As Judith Walkowitz notes, by the turn of the twentieth century Mayfair was London's "bureaucratic center of empire, the hub of communications, transportation, commercial display, entertainment, and finance" (24).
- 20. I am not the first to describe Woolf's antisemitism as genteel. Natania Rosenfeld writes of Woolf's early novel Night and Day that it is a book "purged of the distaste [for Jews] that Virginia had expressed privately." Its tenor, Rosenfeld continues, "is genteel throughout: gentile and genteel" (60). See also Lassner 136.
- 21. It has now become a commonplace of Woolf scholarship that Woolf's interest in obliquity often propels the dramatic arc and shape of her narratives. For instance, Suzanne Raitt argues that Woolf's emphasis on "the things one doesn't say" prompts much of her experiment with voice in *Jacob's Room* (31). Raitt takes the phrase "the things one doesn't say" from a letter Woolf wrote to Janet Case dated 19 November 1919 (*Letters* 2: 400). For more on Woolf's emphasis on obliquity, see Maria DiBattista.
- 22. In "The Duchess" Bacon's manner of eating as a child in the East End emphasizes the economic and social distinctions between London's Jewish community and the English aristocratic class. She writes: "He dabbled his fingers in topes of tripe; he dipped them in pans of frying fish" (250). Later in the text, Bacon imagines himself enjoying the comforts of the Duchess's country home and the company of the Duchess's daughter Diana, a fantasy prompted by the

Duchess herself, who has invited Bacon to join her for a gathering at her family's estate: "He looked past [the Duchess], at the backs of the houses in Bond Street. But he saw, not the houses in Bond Street, but a dimpling river; and trout rising and salmon" (253). The difference between the two scenes indicates how distant Bacon is from the aristocratic community he so admires—he eats "frying fish" but can only imagine "rising trout and salmon"—and also how often Woolf relies on images of food and eating to reflect the incivility of Jews.

- 23. Here I extend Carey Snyder's notion that in order to "revitalize English fiction" and create new methods of experimentation, writers such as Woolf borrowed from outside disciplines, most obviously psychology, but also ethnography and anthropology (93n25).
- 24. This claim runs counter to the position often adopted by critics of Woolf, such as Dean Baldwin, who tend to gainsay the complexity of "The Duchess" and its value in Woolf's overall oeuvre by emphasizing its literary failures: "the appeals of this story are almost entirely those of slick magazine fiction" (62).
- 25. The first edition of Booth's survey was printed in 1889, the last in 1903. For an overview of the history of British ethnographic studies of the East End, see Jon Marriott.
- 26. Sweating system was a term commonly used by ethnographers and politicians to describe the harrowing labor conditions of manufacturing workshops in the East End. For a useful discussion of the system, see Feldman ch. 8.
- 27. This notion was held by advocates of immigration restrictions, who warned that Jewish assimilation was only one part of the Jews' plan to control British interests. Twenty years after the publication of Hird's work, fears about Jewish influence would prompt protofascist organizations such as the Britons to advocate the expatriation of Jews to Madagascar and Australia. For more on the Britons, see Colin Holmes ch. 9.
- 28. As Snaith explains, Woolf drew on this research to depict "Barrett Browning's London (the division between Whitechapel and Wimpole Street, the chronic poverty in the metropolis)" in her 1933 novel Flush; she ultimately links such poverty to "the dire economic and employment situation of the early 1930s, but also the familiar attendant discourses of degeneration, disease, and 'foreignness'" (615). For an example of Duckworth's contribution to Booth's research, see his essay "Jewellers, Gold and Silver Smiths." In their survey of Booth's work, Englander and O'Day describe Duckworth as being of "singular importance to the Booth inquiry" (30).

29. Here I depart from Sonita Sarker's provocative contention that what

remained invisible in the words of Woolf, and emerged in the debates about race, imperial power, and cultural pride [circulating in 1930s politics] was the fact that [non-Anglo-Saxon communities] lived not only in other places, but in London itself. (4)

Sarker's emphasis is on former colonial subjects from India and Africa.

30. Note for instance the parallels between Woolf's transfiguration of Rothschild's butcher-like flesh into a cut of meat and Joyce's transformation of a local pork butcher's "blotchy" fingers into pork sausage in chapter 4 of Ulysses, a transformation witnessed by Bloom, whose carnivorous appetite is merged with his sexual lust throughout the scene: "The ferreteyed porkbutcher folded the sausages he had snipped off with blotchy fingers, sausagepink. Sound meat there: like a stallfed heifer" (48). Joyce connects sausages and fingers first with "sausagepink," which describes both the butcher's fingers and the sausage itself, and then with "blotchy," which, phonetically akin to the word "bloody," turns the butcher's fingers into the image of a freshly cut, bloodied piece of meat. Moments later, he writes of the young woman standing next to Bloom that she "tendered [the butcher] a coin, smiling broadly, holding her thick wrist out." The description produces parallels between the woman's "thick wrists," the butcher's "sound," "sausagepink" fingers, and the sausage itself, all of which seem ready to be "snipped" and wrapped. In fact, Bloom's ravenous desire transforms everything around him into food. The text thus perpetuates a stereotypical image of Jewish insatiability, despite its broader philosemitic attitudes. And yet, through the metonymic structure of the scene, Joyce also suggests that Bloom's sexual desire is as un-Jewish as his desire for pork, even a symptom of his desire not to be Jewish. For both Joyce and Woolf, such desire can appear to be the primary characteristic of the British (or Irish) Jew, whose longing to be assimilated is what inevitably identifies him as unassimilable.

31. For instance, in a December 1933 letter to Quentin Bell, Woolf writes:

If you were here today . . . I should say to you, My dear Quentin, if you will take me, I will come. What to? you may ask. To which I reply, number three Belgrave Square. Who the devil lives there? you would say. And in one word I should reply; a cocktail party given by the Hutchinsons to anticipate their daughter's marriage to the richest Jew in Europe. . . . Oysters and champagne cup. But as youre not here . . . and I've no clothes, and cant be bothered to rush out and buy gloves, hat, and shoes, all for a Jew, I sit in my underground vault . . . writing oh dear how happy I am not to go! (5: 258)

She then shifts her attention to Rothschild's gems: "We had [Rothschild and Barbara] the other night; and they brought a brown bag; and out of this they lifted rubies—rubies set in diamonds. And we all crowned ourselves with the Rothschild rubies; worth £300,000."

- 32. But let us not forget that Hutchinson is also a duchess in this scene, albeit one draped in what elsewhere Woolf calls the "Rothschild rubies" (Letters 5: 258). Thus she plays two parts: an English woman effectively fashioned by a Jew, and the wife of a Jew, whose membership in the English aristocracy is ironically confirmed by a distinctly non-Jewish meal of ham sandwiches.
- 33. Bacon's sighting of the "blue lake and the fringe of palm trees" recalls the same kind of colonial fantasies about the exoticism of the desert that we find in Woolf's 1905 "A Description of the Desert," her review of Gilbert Watson's travel narrative *The Voice of the South.* "The vast desert appears to soothe the mind into a state of philosophic calm," she writes, praising Watson's depiction of the desert landscape (72). She then turns to the activities of Watson's Arab guide, Athman, who she says "had negro blood in his veins, of which he was deeply ashamed" (73). She concludes her review with Athman's disappearance from Watson's group, linking Athman's "negro" foreignness directly with the "mystery and charm" of the desert:

For by chance he saw a dancer who as she danced expressed in some mysterious way that voice of the South, to which the Arab, as he had once explained, can never be deaf. To follow her he left his master and his friends, and rode away . . . into the desert. Whether we accept this and much that is like it as fact or fiction, there is no doubt that Mr. Watson has managed to convey to us something of the mystery and charm of the strange land where such things happen. (73).

- 34. For a useful discussion of the relationship between postcards and the commodification of ethnological types in Europe and America, see Robert W. Rydell and Mark Wollaeger.
- 35. In *Three Guineas* she advocates destroying universities with "Rags. Petrol. Matches" (36).
- 36. See chapter 7 in particular. For more on Woolf's responses to the exhibit and on the impact of Post-Impressionist painting on her writing, see Goldman ch. 9.
- 37. Desmond McCarthy, recalling the exhibit in 1945, writes that the "Art Quake of 1910 [was] no gradual infiltration, but—bang! an assault along the whole academic front of art."

38. For further analysis of the work of Mass-Observation see Kushner, We Europeans.

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John Barth's The Floating Opera and Southern Modernism of the 1950s

Thomas F. Haddox

Despite hailing from and frequently setting his fiction on the Eastern Shore of Maryland—a region whose history includes slavery, plantation agriculture, widespread support for the Confederate cause during the Civil War, and de jure racial segregation into the 1960s-John Barth is rarely considered a southern writer. His fiction displays little interest in what were once considered the orthodox preoccupations of the southern renascence, such as, in Cleanth Brooks's words, "the pervading sense of community,""the sense of religious wholeness," or "a sense of the tragic dimension of life," all of which were held to exist more robustly in rural societies (217). Nor is Barth much given to railing against industrialization or the abstractions of life under finance capitalism. His work does not dwell on racial matters, representing neither the worst horrors of southern racism nor the quests for freedom and collective redemption that they have provoked. His sensibility is primarily comic, his fiction largely free of tragic and gothic monumentalism, and his public persona that of a nice guy who likes to write, wants readers to like his work, and smiles bemusedly when accused of a lack of gravitas.

On the few occasions when critics have considered Barth's possible southernness, they have done so under the rubric of "place," for as Martyn Bone observes, "It is a truth universally acknowledged among Southern literary scholars that 'the South' and 'southern literature' have been characterized by a 'sense of place.' "(vii). This phrase, evoking both what Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht calls "production of presence" (xiii—xiv) and dense historical resonance, still serves in some quarters as shorthand for southern authenticity, and critics who apply it to Barth ask whether

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his work possesses it sufficiently, usually answering in the negative. Lewis A. Lawson, for instance, in a brief entry on Barth in The History of South ern Literature, opines that Barth's early work still shows "some regard for the ability of place to particularize an existence," so that the "hot, dense flattened-out land/sea scape of Maryland's Eastern Shore is not merely employed as a background or as a reflection of mood, but is a factor that circumscribes. . . . In time, though," Lawson continues, "place simply becomes a trifle, like Muzak in the dentist's office—an external which bores, but in no other way impinges upon consciousness" (517). Even Barth's re-creation of Maryland's colonial history in The Sot-Weed Factor (1960) proceeds not from "a close attention to landmark or artifact" but "from culture, from talk" and culminates in a (heretical) sense that all values are relative. John M. Bradbury, writing in 1969, goes further and castigates both Barth and Walker Percy for betraying the southern literary heritage, presenting a "modern South, which is no longer a cultural entity" (321) but a "tragicomic absurdity" (329).

Barth, for his part, has provoked such critique through his repeated assertions that social history, politics, and ethics have no claim on his fictive practice. "Muse, spare me (at the desk, I mean) from social-historical responsibility, and in the last analysis from every other kind as well, except artistic," he wrote in 1965 ("Muse" 55).2 Fourteen years later, he would assert simultaneously a humanist faith in the timelessness and placelessness of great literature and an aesthete's belief in its essential self-reflexivity: "The literature that finally matters in any culture is almost never principally about that culture" but rather about "the passions of the human breast . . . the possibilities of human language . . . [and] almost always also about itself" ("Historical Fiction" 190, 191; Barth's italics). The former statement anticipates John Gardner's notorious attack on Barth in On Moral Fiction; the latter one invites critique from the left for its ahistoricality and its naive or irresponsible politics.3 And both statements stand in contrast to the prescriptive conservatism, committed both to artistic moral responsibility and to the centrality of place, that informs the judgments of Lawson and Bradbury.

Like many declarations of the autonomy of the aesthetic, however, Barth's is shot through with half-acknowledged concessions to the claims of history and politics. His passion for fiction's most spectacular displays of virtuosity, such as *The Thousand Nights and a Night* or the *Ficciones* of Jorge Luis Borges, entails a sense of historical responsibility: writers should read

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these works not only so that they might measure themselves against the these works against the best fiction of the past but also in order to know what formal innovations best fiction of the lateral innovations what formal innovations matter at a given historical moment. As he put it in "The Literature of matter at a Bright manifesto for metafiction: Exhaustion," his 1967 manifesto for metafiction:

Our century is more than two-thirds done; it is dismaying to see so many of our writers following Dostoevsky or Tolstoy or Balzac, when the question seems to me to be how to succeed not even Joyce and Kafka, but those who succeeded Joyce and Kafka and are now in the evenings of their own careers.4 (67)

In other words, while Barth rejects the imperatives of social and political history, he acknowledges those of literary history. For a writer of the second half of the twentieth century, Barth suggests, realism is too nineteenth-century ("a fucking bore," as one of his characters puts it in Sabbatical [136]), high modernism is worthy of admiration (precisely for its antirealism) but also at the end of its tether, and only the self-conscious reflexivity of metafiction now affords the "passionate virtuosity" ("More Troll" 79) that is always the mark of the strong writer. Even here, however, Barth uses ethically and politically charged language to describe contemporary writers' relationship to literary history, considering Gardner's call for "moral fiction," for instance, not just passé but "aggressively reactionary" ("Replenishment" 196). And his retrospective introduction to "The Literature of Exhaustion," published in 1984, suggests that the essay must be read in the historical context of the "American High Sixties" to be properly understood: "Rereading it now, I sniff traces of tear gas in its margins; I hear an echo of disruption between its lines" (64). Such moments gesture, however transiently, toward the intertwining of literary and social history and a writer's necessary entanglement with both.

Though Barth does not theorize the relationship between sociopolitical history and literary history or make explicit the political and historical imperatives that occasionally surface in his advocacy of metafiction, his desire to position his work in a dialectical relationship with high modetnism offers a way to view his relationship to southern literary traditions. Many canonical texts of the southern renascence, after all, are also modernist literature, belonging to that strand of avowedly conservative but often more politically complex modernism typified by the work of T.S. Eliot and further developed by Allen Tate and William Faulkner—a strand that combines radical formal innovation, allegiance to a past that

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is both idealized and perceived as an impossible burden, and an imperative to reflect the temporal dislocations and uneven social and economic developments of modernity. To the extent that southern modernism is modernist, however, its regionalist orientation also implies both continuity with and contestation of national (and even international) cultural and political traditions—a point recently emphasized by Leigh Anne Duck. Because modernist writers were often explicit about their political sympathies and about the way these were allegedly concretized in literary form, we can gauge how Barth, in responding to modernism, also responds to these sympathies and implications. In this way we can situate *The Floating Opera* as an intervention in the staging of southern/conservative and American/liberal values in tandem with modernist literary values.

In this essay I argue that The Floating Opera, Barth's first novel, is best read not just as the opening exhibit of his own agon with modernist greatness but also as an ambivalent critique of the conservatism that imbued and partially justified the major texts of southern literary modernism. What has often been read as the novel's reflection of the existentialist vogue of the 1950s, its self-conscious echoings of Albert Camus's Myth of Sisyphus, is perhaps more aptly understood as a rethinking of the literary tradition imbued by Agrarian axioms. Todd Andrews, the novel's protagonist, must come to grips not just with the suicide of his father—itself a theme that places the novel within a set of distinctly white, southern, and upper-class concerns about the power of patriarchy, the possibilities for heroic action in modernity, and the fear of not living up to the past's example—but also with the crisis of the social order that has produced these concerns in the first place. Todd's interminable Inquiry into his father's suicide, culminating in the nihilistic conclusions that "there is no ultimate 'reason' for valuing anything" (223) and therefore "no final reason for living" (228), can then be heard as the response of a white, propertied southern male (indeed, a gentleman-lawyer) to the breakdown of the order that has defined him. In this sense, Bradbury is correct to see in Barth's work the transformation of the South into a "tragicomic absurdity"—and in fact, because its critique of the standard southern ideology proceeds not by simple rejection but by parodic repetition of that ideology's tropes and preoccupations, The Floating Opera might be described as an early postsouthern text. But its vision is uncharacteristically subdued for a postsouthern fiction and betrays a simultaneous attraction to the aura of southernness that Todd's questioning so relentlessly

demystifies. Perhaps the fact that critics have done little to investigate the demystines. I demonstrate the develops this thems but it with which Barth develops this theme but also to the fact that they have with which the take place arguments on behalf of tended to read it through the lens of his later arguments on behalf of tended to learn the take place, as it were, after the field has been metafiction, arguments that take place, as it were, after the field has been cleared of the ghost of Faulkner. We might conclude, in the manner of Harold Bloom, that in working through a southern "anxiety of influence" in The Floating Opera, Barth was able to free himself enough to become a metafictionist and to affirm his lack of historical responsibility. But as an imaginative response to the end of a South defined by white supremacy, ideologies of patriarchy and paternalism, and perpetual inwardness, The Floating Opera suggests that this end was characterized as much by loss as by gain. Though Barth continually identified himself as a liberal and thus hews more closely to the national pole in the modernist contestation of national and southern identities, it is difficult not to conclude that The Floating Opera finds—perhaps despite itself—just as much value in the conservatism of a traditionally defined southernness.

High modernism, southern modernism,

late modernism

The fundamental paradox of the conservative high modernism that begins with Eliot and wields such influence in southern literature is that while it cherished political and aesthetic structures of order as bulwarks that might endure beyond the messy contingencies of history, it also recognized its own historical situatedness and conceived of its own interventions dialectically. The iconic power of The Waste Land, after all, derives from a perceived historical catastrophe, the reduction of the Western tradition to fragments in the wake of the First World War and its attendant moral bankruptcy. In turn, this catastrophe becomes comprehensible as the result of a long historical process whose origins Eliot would famously locate in the seventeenth-century "dissociation of sensibility" ("Metaphysical Poets" 64) and the revolutionary context of the English Civil War. The catastrophe, however, does not usher in despondency. Eliot's religious conversion, so surprising to many of his earliest admirers, and his espousal of a point of view." of view "royalist in politics, classicist in literature, and Anglo-Catholic in teligion". teligion" (Lancelot ix) constitute not just a turning away from an author-

ity based on "filiation" to one based on "affiliation" (to use Edward Said's terms [16–17]) but also an implicit commitment to dialectic. Against the forces of modernity Eliot deploys an antithesis of religious and political orthodoxy and hopes that what will issue forth (hopes gestured toward in *The Idea of a Christian Society* and *Notes toward a Definition of Culture*) will be an enduring synthesis.

That this dialectical movement involves identifying villains (bourgeois liberals and humanists in general, to be sure, but more ominously, also the "freethinking Jews" whose presence Eliot found "undesirable" [After Strange Gods 20]) should not blind critics on the left to its utopian impulses, which are inseparable from its negation of the existing liberal and capitalist order. Fredric Jameson, for instance, extending his earlier claim that all collectivity contains a foreshadowing of utopia, has distinguished between the "high" (and "genuine") modernism that held sway before the Second World War and the postwar "late modernism" (165) of writers such as Blanchot, Beckett, and Nabokov. High modernism, committed to oppositional politics and aesthetics, can be enlisted on the side of the angels, while late modernism, a product of the Cold War, commits itself to the absolute autonomy of the aesthetic object and thereby to the erasure of politics altogether. Therefore, Jameson concludes, "the politics of Pound and Eliot (as suspicious and right-wing as both may have been) was the sign that they were genuine modernists, that is to say, that they held to the Absolute and to Utopianism" (168).8

The influence of Eliot on the major writers of the southern renascence has been amply documented, and among these writers, Allen Tate corresponds most closely to Eliot in his role as poet and dialectician. Like Eliot, Tate proposed a program that was avowedly political. As Martyn Bone has most recently emphasized—and as too many critics have forgotten—the Agrarianism of the 1930s was not just a source of images for southern writers and critics to draw from but also an actual political movement with its own utopian yearnings (indeed, a movement that thought more concretely about what political change might require than Eliot ever did). It was also predicated on theories about southern history and its relationship to southern literature that attempted to explain why there was such an outpouring of literary riches in the 1920s and 1930s, just as Eliot's theories offered a historical rationale for the emergence of high modernism. Yet while Tate and other southern modernists took

over from Eliot the belief that a stable social structure, a commitment to traditional values, and a metaphysical grounding in religion were necessary to combat the corrosive forces of modernity, they were also far more pessimistic about their prospects for success. While Eliot was able, so to speak, to transcend the modern Waste Land in the elegant and doctrinally orthodox resolutions of the *Four Quartets* (and to go on, as Jameson sadly notes, to function as an ambassador of official late modernism, "a kind of aesthetic NATO ideology" [168]), Tate and his compatriots intimated, even before the Second World War, that the struggle for a revivified South was doomed.

In 1935's "The Profession of Letters in the South," Tate accounted

for the southern renascence in this way:

The Southern novelist has left his mark upon the age; but it is of the age. From the peculiarly historical consciousness of the Southern writer has come good work of a special order; but the focus of this consciousness is quite temporary. It has made possible the curious burst of intelligence that we get at a crossing of the ways, not unlike, on an infinitesimal scale, the outburst of poetic genius at the end of the sixteenth century when commercial England had begun to crush feudal England. (533)

Ten years later Tate would revisit this passage in "The New Provincialism," expressing his continued agreement with it but adding, "With the war of 1914–1918, the South reentered the world—but gave a backward glance as it stepped over the border: that backward glance gave us the southern renascence, a literature conscious of the past in the present" (545). In both essays, the implication is that great literature is produced precisely by the tension between an idealized past, defined by a rural economy and traditional values, and an industrial, capitalist, secularizing present. But this greatness lasts only as long as the tension lasts, and because Tate is convinced that capitalism cannot, in the end, be resisted, not just the southern tenascence but the South itself is destined for extinction. In 1959's "A Southern Mode of the Imagination" he takes the final step: "Southern literature in the second half of this century may cease to engage the scholarly imagination; the subject may eventually become academic, and buried with the last dissertation" (582). As Bone summarizes,

Tate sees the "real" ("real property") South as a premodern, almost precapitalist, agricultural society. Yet as early as 1935 Tate is stating that such a society no longer exists, except in the collective memory of Southern Renascence writers. By 1945, Tate is suggesting that the representational authenticity, even the very possibility, of "southern literature" ended with the Renascence itself valued primarily for its vivid, doom-laden depiction of the South becoming dis-placed, de-realized, by capitalist development. By 1959, Tate dismisses even the *study* of contemporary (post-Renasence) southern literature. (23–24)

And yet, as Bone goes on to point out, during the 1950s southern literary study flourished despite Tate's gloomy predictions. William Faulkner's Nobel Prize for Literature in 1950 no doubt had a galvanizing effect, but as Fred Hobson has noted, the appearance of Southern Renascence, a 1953 volume edited by Louis D. Rubin Jr. and Robert D. Jacobs, marks the beginning of southern literature as an academic discipline, and the paradigm of southern literature defined largely by Rubin is firmly based on Agrarian ideology in general and on Tate's historical conception of modern southern literature in particular (Hobson 743-44). Establishing such a discipline in the face of Tate's pessimism entailed both a depoliticization of Agrarian content, a transformation of formerly politically charged ideas into "images" (a transformation facilitated by the journey of many former Agrarians and their disciples into apolitical New Criticism and positions in northern universities) and an accommodation to new political realities that the Agrarians themselves would not have applauded—the flight of millions of southerners from farms to urban areas on the one hand and the emergence of the civil rights movement on the other. Just as high modernists such as Eliot accommodated themselves to the political quietism of late modernism—and in the process saw themselves established as the modernist canon—southern modernists found themselves subsumed into late modernism and established as a canon. In one respect, this was an unambiguous advance, for under the leadership of Rubin and similar critics, southernist literary study repudiated the overt racism of some Agrarian documents, even though their blindnesses to the extent of racism (and their too-frequent failure to consider the work of African American southern writers as genuinely southern) presented

problems of its own. 10 At the same time, however, it is difficult to disagree with Jameson that in becoming institutionalized, both early and southern modernists found their work drained of much of its radical potential. Eliot's long tenure as the elder statesman of modernism (codified by his own Nobel Prize in 1948 and contrasted with Ezra Pound's trial for treason) and Tate's involvement in Cold War cultural outreach programs such as the Congress of Cultural Freedom at roughly the same time that his poetic production ended do indeed suggest a falling off. 11

This, then, was the literary and critical context of the 1950s with which the young John Barth contended: an institutionalized, increasingly apolitical late modernism that included southern literary study and that had embraced (in tandem with the rise of New Criticism) the priority of the image. Meanwhile, great high modernists from Eliot to Faulkner, though still active, had accommodated themselves to these new conditions, and their newer works were almost universally seen as having suffered a decline in quality. Though I would dispute Robert Seguin's claim that the 1950s were "a baleful time for the novel, with something pinched and constricted about the work of this era, positioned unfavorably between the great interwar period on one hand and the exuberant metafictional and multicultural bounty on the other" (126)—and observe that a decade that produced Ellison's *Invisible Man*, O'Connor's *Wise Blood*, and Nabokov's *Lolita* can more than hold its own against subsequent decades—he is undoubtedly correct that for the young Barth, a

certain shrinkage of the aesthetic horizon is discernible, something confirmed by Barth's own doubts about his identity as a modernist writer and his misgivings about the place and meaning of aesthetic labor in this period. Questions of career and vocation are certainly at issue here. (135)

As I will show, Barth's negotiation of this context in writing *The Floating Opera* includes both his personal desire to surpass the achievement of the modernists and his complicated response to the cultural and political matrix of southern modernism. And this leads us back to his "sense of place," which is indeed the obvious starting point for considering his relationship with southern modernism.

Marshes, tides, and the Dixie Limited

In "Some Reasons Why I Tell the Stories I Tell the Way I Tell Them Rather Than Some Other Stories Some Other Way," an apologia that appeared in the *New York Times Book Review* in 1982, Barth included a section headed "Marshes, Tides" that went into lyrical praise of his birth-place, Dorchester County, Maryland:

Eighty percent of that county is sub-sea level: estuarine wetlands all but uninhabited by men, but teeming like bayous and everglades with other life: the nursery of Chesapeake Bay. No hills down there to go up; and your pail of water will be salt.

More exactly, it will be brackish, turbid, tidal, and tepid: about the same salinity and summer temperature, I am persuaded, as the fluid we all first swam in. Unlike lake water on the one hand or ocean on the other, this will not sting your eyes. Dorchester Countians sensibly nowadays prefer swimming pools, to avoid the medusa jellyfish, or sea nettle (and the watermen, like watermen everywhere, seldom swim at all); but as summer youngsters we played in the natural element for hours and hours, eyes always open. We were often nettled but never chilled; on the other hand, we could see little farther than in the womb. (3–4)

The imagery of the womb, the sense of pastoral plenitude protected by ignorance of a wider world, the irony directed against a progress that replaces bayous with swimming pools: all resonate with what has been called a distinctly southern "aesthetic of anti-development" (Godden 11) that often takes the swamp as a prototypical southern place, resistant to the commodifying logic of capitalism but simultaneously and gloriously everyday. 12 In Dorchester County, the public school system is "unaffluent, semirural, and semi-Southern" ("Some Reasons" 2), and "nothing and almost nobody was distinguished" (4). The contrast with neighboring, marshless Talbot County—formerly the site of large plantations (and Frederick Douglass's birthplace) and now the overpopulated home of millionaires—only makes Dorchester's pristine, southern ordinariness clearer. It is even symbolically fitting that in "Some Reasons" Barth describes his own journey toward a distinguished writing career as precipitated by a trip "to the top of the Empire State Building and all over the New York World's Fair of 1939/1940."Travel to the urban North, figured by southern modernist writers both as a loss of innocence and as a chal-

lenge that forces the aspiring southern writer to acknowledge his place, lenge that local length in exactly this way: the young Barth realizes "(1) This place Dorchester County] speaks to me in ways that I don't even understand [Dorcnester] On going to get out of here and become a distinguished something-or-other" (4).

Yet after having gilded his reminiscences of Dorchester County with a recognizably southern aesthetic of place, Barth explains its significance

to his own writerly practice in historically fanciful terms:

In Civil War times Maryland was a Border State. Mason's and Dixon's Line runs east-west across its top and then, appropriately, north-south down the Eastern Shore, which was heavily Loyalist in the Revolution and Confederate in the War Between the States. Marsh country is a border state, too, between land and sea, and tide-marsh doubly so, its twin diurnal ebbs and floods continuously reorchestrating the geography. . . . Your webfooted amphibious marsh-nurtured writer will likely by mere reflex regard many conventional boundaries and distinctions as arbitrary, fluid, negotiable: form versus content, realism versus irrealism, fact versus fiction, life versus art.

What sounded at first like a paean to a modernist aesthetic quickly becomes, after passing through a self-consciously frivolous invocation of epic history, a basis for "postmodernist" metafiction, with the original political associations of a "border state" transmuted into an occasion for aesthetic play.

Turning back from Barth's apologia of 1982 to the voice of Todd Andrews in The Floating Opera (1956), we find the following account of

growing up on the Eastern Shore:

When I think of Cambridge and of Dorchester County, the things I think of, understandably, are crabbing, oystering, fishing, muskrat-trapping, duckhunting, sailing, and swimming. It is virtually impossible, no matter what his station, for a boy to grow to puberty in the County without experiencing most of these activities and becoming proficient in one or two of them.

Virtually, but not entirely. I, for example, though I was not a sheltered child, managed to attain the age of twenty-seven years without ever having gone crabbing, oystering, fishing, muskrattrapping, duckhunting, sailing, or even swimming, despite the

fact that all my boyhood companions enjoyed these pursuits. I just never got interested in them. . . . But lest you conclude too easily that this represents some position of mine, let me add that I have done some sailing since I set up my law practice here in 1927—though I still can't handle a sailboat myself—and I'd become, as a matter of fact, something of an expert swimmer by the time of this story. And this does, in a small way, reflect a philosophical position of mine, or at least a general practice, to wit: being less than consistent in practically everything, so that any general statement about me will probably me inadequate. (57–58)

Todd's defensiveness, his distaste at the thought that a "general statement" might be adequate to describe him, is an apt figuration of the dilemma of the writer who must set his work in a place but would deny as much as possible the claims of that place on him. Unlike the young Barth of "Some Reasons," Todd is in Dorchester but not of it, even as his decision to become a sailor and a swimmer long after he should have picked up these activities naturally hints that authenticity of place can be acquired and even faked. Indeed, as a man who comes to understand his meticulously worked-out philosophical stances as a series of masks, Todd is an aspiring metafictionist who would maximize his freedom, turning eventually to suicide as the surest means of doing so. Todd's own foregrounding of the artifice of his writing—his digressions, ruthless disregard of chronology, repeated references to his life story as a "novel," and use in one chapter of two separate and simultaneous columns of print on a single page—is implicitly metafictional, though not yet accompanied by the simultaneous theoretical discourse about the status of literature that would become Barth's trademark. And just as any judgment of Todd based on one of his transitory masks will not, he maintains, do justice to his freedom and open-endedness, neither will any expectation of writerly convention do justice to the novelist's potential. If by 1982 Barth is able to embrace his identity as a Dorchester County boy to a greater degree than his 1956 protagonist can, it is in part because by 1982 his fully theorized metafictional practice has provided a defense against what might seem like mere derivation. The older writer can assert his kinship with a southern sense of place, showing off his ability to deploy southern tropes while twisting them to his own purposes; the younger writer, on guard

against accusations that he lacks originality, presents an alter ego bristling with defenses against them.

In the 1950s the greatest perceived threat to an emerging southern writer's originality would have been the work of William Faulkner. As Flannery O'Connor famously put it in 1960, "The presence alone of Faulkner in our midst makes a great deal of difference in what the writer can and cannot permit himself to do. Nobody wants his mule and wagon stalled on the same track the Dixie Limited is roaring down" (45). Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County, with its decaying aristocrats, plain white folk of the hill country, and stoic African Americans, had already become literature's most southern place by 1950, even as the grand old man's work was already beginning to slip into self-parody—perhaps, to use Jameson's terms, an inevitable consequence of his transformation from high modernist disturber of the peace to establishment late modernist and winner of the Nobel Prize. 13 No less than O'Connor, Elizabeth Spencer, Reynolds Price, and other white southern writers struggling in the 1950s to distinguish themselves from Faulkner, Barth wrestled with the Faulknerian burden. As he put it in 1988, his "first two book-length efforts," The Floating Opera and The End of the Road, were "an ersatz Faulkner novel and a projected Boccaccian cycle of one hundred Chesapeake tidemarsh tales," both of which "had justly failed to find a publisher" because "[their] author was neither a Faulkner nor a Boccaccio" (Foreword v, vi). The problem of writing The Floating Opera in the wake of these failures focused precisely on sense of place:

how to integrate on home grounds—the tidewater Maryland area where I had grown up, and where my imagination was still rooted like marsh grass—the two large sources of literary inspiration exemplified by those abortive early projects: the great Modernists like Joyce and Faulkner on whom I had cut my apprentice teeth, and the old tale-tellers like "Scheherazade" and Boccaccio whom I had devoured extracurricularly. (v-vi)

Barth has never denied the influence of "Scheherazade" on his work, but such an influence, with its vast temporal and cultural distance from 1950s Maryland, proves far less threatening and, ironically enough, easier to assimilate than the southern modernism of Faulkner. The existential and ideological cavortings of *The Floating Opera* become more lucid if they are seen as a simultaneous tribute to and revolt against not just the man from

Oxford but also the southern literary tradition that critics erected around his work and that Barth feared might swallow his own efforts up.

The death of a southern lawyer

Nowhere can we see Barth's Faulknerian burden more clearly than in Todd's relationship to his father. Like Quentin Compson, who broods obsessively on the Sutpens' past in Absalom, Absalom! and agonizes over his own lack of masculine heroism in The Sound and the Fury, Todd is driven by the dual desire to understand the past (that is, why his father killed himself) and to assert himself before his father by remedying the "imperfect communication" (220) that existed between them. Indeed, we learn that the entire novel is a fragment of an immense Letter to My Father, for which the Inquiry is only a preparation, and the fact that his father will never read this letter only underscores how much more futile Todd's obsession is than Quentin's. Like Jason Compson III, Todd's father is a gentleman-lawyer in a small southern town with melancholic, self-destructive tendencies, a respected but unreliable pillar of the social order; like Quentin, Todd entertains suicide.

That the death of his father is the central trauma of Todd's life is curious, because as a veteran of the First World War he has known both the paralyzing fear of a man under fire and the horror of having stabbed another man to death. These experiences, however, do not appear to trouble him much; indeed, Todd is downright breezy in explaining the significance of his wartime experiences, which have led him "never [to] expect much from [himself] or [his] fellow animals," never to "characterize people in a word or phrase," "rarely [to] pass judgment on them at all," and always to "do things more slowly, more systematically, and more thoroughly" (68). These lessons, even as they echo the extensive modernist literature of postwar disillusion (Todd's turning away from daydreaming, low expectations for human behavior, appreciation for precision, and even repeated problems with impotence recall Hemingway's Jake Barnes), do not pack the same emotional punch. Not only does Todd's disillusionment not entail a loss of political idealism (of his motives for going to war, Todd writes only that he "enlisted impulsively," "wasn't patriotic," and "had no feelings at all about the issues involved, if there were any" [60, 61]), it leaves untouched his most enduring beliefs and fears, which are only indirectly acknowledged in his worry about "imperfect

communication"—namely, his faith in his father and his fear that he will not live up to his standards (in part because he believes that he will not outlive his father). Given both the repeatedly stressed distance between himself and his father (for instance, "[He] always expressed concern over my welfare and proper guidance, but from either necessity or disinclination he seldom gave me a great deal of personal attention" [117]) and the presence of other potentially traumatic experiences in his life, why does only his father's death result in the kind of repetitive, obsessive-compulsive behavior that is one hallmark of genuine trauma?

Critics have often precluded this question by rejecting the coherence of Todd altogether. Patricia Tobin argues that "this compulsive neatenerup and hellbent literalist of a protagonist could not have made up this book we are reading, not on the most figurally propitious day of his wan and dogged life" (29); Robert Seguin goes further, calling "this discursive pastiche known as 'Todd' ""'structurally unsound" and arguing that we should resist "the common temptation to psychoanalyze" him (134). While I agree that Todd's explanations are frequently outlandish, I do not share this reluctance to psychoanalyze, because the implicitly southern context that shapes his father's death provides more "soundness" to Todd's peregrinations than is at first apparent. His shock at the suicide, after all, is expressed largely in his disbelief of his father's obvious, vulgar motive: "Does one's father hang himself for a simple, stupid lack of money? . . . Surely the dirt of the planet would cry the reason for it, the justification that would brook no questioning" (183, 184). In order to understand the force of Todd's reaction, it is helpful to see his father as a familiar southern type that the novel both invokes and attempts to critique: the gentlemanlawyer.

In much twentieth-century southern fiction, the gentleman-lawyer (always white) occupies a position of social respectability but not extreme wealth, and may even live in a genteel poverty that results from his family's long-term economic decline or loss of self-assurance. Faulkner's genealogy of the Compsons in the appendix to *The Sound and the Fury*, for instance, shows that while the nineteenth-century Compsons produced a governor of Mississippi and a heroic but unsuccessful general, the best the twentieth century can produce is Jason III, a man who "sat all day long with a decanter of whiskey and a litter of dogeared Horaces and Livys and Catulluses" (Appendix 742). Southern gentleman-lawyers are fastidious, sometimes to the point of eccentricity—Todd's father, for instance, always

does manual labor in his good clothes, "mak[ing] a fetish of it, like the nineteenth-century surgeons who affected evening clothes in the operating rooms and prided themselves on executing difficult surgery without bloodying their starched and studded shirt fronts" (Floating Opera 71). (He is, in fact, impeccably tailored, with "not a smudge of dirt anywhere on him" and clothes "perfectly creased and free of wrinkles," when Todd discovers his body hanging in the cellar [182].) As a learned man, the southern gentleman-lawyer is called on to uphold the conservative social order but does so unreliably; as one whose profession demands rhetorical skill, he typifies Tate's influential theory that the southern mind is essentially "rhetorical" rather than dialectical (for Tate, southern conversation, to its argumentative weakness, "is not going anywhere; it is not about anything" ["Southern Mode" 584]); and as one acutely conscious of the long decline that makes up his personal and cultural history, he is prone to melancholy, irony, and even to surprising, if muted, critiques of the social order. 14 Thus Jason Compson III, the amiable alcoholic, "compos[es] (it was said) caustic and satiric eulogies on both his dead and his living fellowtownsmen" (Appendix 742).

Later incarnations of the southern gentleman-lawyer, from Faulkner's windbag Gavin Stevens to Harper Lee's Atticus Finch, can even criticize the southern racial order in public, though only by insisting that gradualism must be the guiding principle of any change and carefully maintaining their own aura of respectability and noble failure. The gentleman-lawyer is a tragic but also a sentimental figure, associated both with nostalgia for the Lost Cause (inasmuch as he cannot live up to his forebears' accomplishments) and with the possibility of change (even though this change can only be experienced by him as a personal defeat). He is too just, too honorable, and too fastidious for the twentieth century, and no one takes him very seriously—which is perhaps why he can be safely entrusted with the occasional gesture toward racial liberalism. He is sometimes suicidal.

Yet to compare the suicide of Todd's father with that of Will Barrett's father in Walker Percy's *The Last Gentleman*—one of the most realized incarnations of the type—is to reveal how much Barth undermines the prestige of the gentleman-lawyer even as he draws on it. Like Barrett's father, Todd's father is a man of quiet but firm will who has an immense influence on his son: he sees to it that Todd will attend Johns Hopkins, study law, and join a fraternity—"Beta Alpha Order, a Southern outfit" (129)—all the while protesting that Todd is free to do as he pleases. Bar-

rett's father, however, kills himself from despair at having compromised his honor in a deal to get the white supremacist rabble to leave the town. his honor in a case of the to leave the town.

As he tells his son, moments before he kills himself (with the Great Horn As he tells I have the state of the Great Horn Theme from Brahms's First Symphony playing on the gramophone for Theme noin 2... Once they were the fornicators and the bribers and the takers of bribes and we were not and that was why they hated us. Now we are like them....They know they don't have to kill me" (317). The possibility that the behavior associated with one's status might be mimetic rather than innate, that a quasiaristocrat might be able to "perform" as a dishonorable ruffian in a manner that convinces everyone, is presented in Percy's novel as an existential horror that would understandably justify the suicide of anyone who discovers it. Todd's father, however, gives no such explanation for his suicide, and nothing contradicts the obvious conclusion that "a simple, stupid lack of money" is his sole motive. If his gravitas, eccentricity, and concern for respectability align him with Faulkner's Jason Compson III, Todd's father nevertheless shows himself susceptible to the blandishments of finance capitalism: like Jason Compson IV he betrays the southern Agrarian ethos, mortgaging what remains of his "real" property (the family home, a summer cottage, and "one or two timber lots down the county" [182]) and investing it in the stock market, which promptly crashes.

He is not, however, alone among Dorchester County residents in having betrayed this ethos. The two richest men in the county, Harrison Mack Sr. and Colonel Henry Morton, owe their fortunes to agriculture, and both ironically suggest the beneficent, paternalist, and slightly dotty planter, the summit of the social order in so many southern novels. 16 Mack presides over a household that includes faithful African American retainers, and he eventually succumbs to the delusions of grandeur that are one of a planter's occupational hazards: his instructions to have his shit preserved in glass jars after his death not only set into motion a furious legal battle over his estate but also suggest a hilarious (though typically "southern") equation between his own person and the fertility of his land. And Colonel Morton's honorific, never explained, evokes the familiar southern fiction of bestowing military titles on leading citizens or successful entrepreneurs (a real-world example can be found in the iconic person of "Colonel" Harland Sanders of Kentucky Fried Chicken fame). Yet the irony of Morton's honorific points toward the larger problem of viewing Mack and Morton as representative planters: instead of hewing

to Agrarian-approved farming methods, they have industrialized their operations, so that Mack's fortune now derives from pickle factories and Morton's from the marketing of canned tomatoes. Both are unabashedly capitalist and recognized as such. 17 Mack, for instance, must contend with a rebellious son who distributes Marxist literature to his workers (21). And Morton is so committed to the logic of exchange value that when Todd sends him \$5,000, saying that it is "just a gift" (189), he cannot believe it and begins to engage Todd in a potlatch that, as Chris Conti argues, shows Todd's successful exposure of "the currency of capitalism and its arbitrary declaration that bits of paper represent real value" (149). Todd's disgust with money and with exchange value, which Conti identifies as one of the wellsprings of his narrative aesthetic, should thus be seen not just in relation to his father's death but as a sign that Todd continues to subscribe to the pseudoaristocratic values attributed to southern planters and lawyers alike—values that, in their purest form, hold the very existence of money to be stupid and vulgar, however necessary it may be.

Yet if Todd considers himself betrayed by his father and suffers from the collapse of the values associated with him, he also shows a certain amount of resistance to them. On the one hand, he continues some of his father's quirky habits, such as the practice of doing manual labor in good clothes, and he follows his father into the profession of law. On the other hand, even before his father's death, he rebels against the social hierarchy to which his father belongs by proposing, "in an adolescently idealistic moment," to amend his fraternity's constitution "to admit Jews and Negroes," thus bringing the "righteous wrath of Beta Alpha upon [his] head" (131). More pointedly, Todd subverts the practice of law, acting not out of a belief in the justice of his profession—he professes, "I don't know what you mean, sir, when you speak of justice"—but rather because he is "curious about things that the law can be made to do, but this disinterestedly, without involvement," like a child idly putting obstacles in the way of a toy tractor (84). The fact that many of his clients are wealthy men far more concerned with the fate of their money than Todd is thus seems appropriate.

Part of the difficulty of assessing Todd's actions, then, lies in determining which of these two stances—devotion to his father and critique of him—is more genuine and which is more properly a mask. A further difficulty surrounds the fact that Todd insists throughout the novel on his "unenthusiastic excitement" (205) toward nearly everything, thus

precluding any evaluative language that might clue readers in to a basis for his judgments. No doubt these difficulties help to explain why critics sometimes declare Todd incoherent. Perhaps, however, Todd's notion of "unenthusiastic excitement" itself provides a clue as to how we should understand his final estimate of his father. As Seguin has suggested, "unenthusiastic excitement" is also expressed by the word fun:

Fun as I am invoking it here can be provisionally characterized as the continual effort to rearticulate what Benjamin described as *Erlebnis* as an affectively charged and "full" phenomenon, to cover over the essential lack that structures it. Benjamin contrasted Erlebnis with *Erfahrung*, both of which translate as "experience"; however, the latter refers to experience informed by collective social arrangements (and whose aesthetic corollary is storytelling), whereas the latter [sic; Seguin probably means "former" here] denotes its modern, privatized counterpart, one marked by a decline in the essential narratability of events. . . . [F]un strives to avoid any immediate association with anxiety or dread. (131, 132)

In other words, fun appears as a dominant mood (perhaps even a cultural imperative) precisely when the alienating effects of capitalist modernity have rendered *Erfahrung* problematic, even impossible. Unlike prior examples of modernist alienation, however, fun does not evoke "anxiety or dread" but affectlessness (Seguin contrasts the emerging "fun" of the 1950s, for instance, with the violence that mass alienation produces in Nathanael West's *The Day of the Locust*). In this sense, fun makes sense as a reaction formation to the perception of shrunken horizons, to the sense that certain possibilities for rewarding modes of life have disappeared. In *The Floating Opera*, these shrunken horizons are associated with Todd's father and with the vanished preindustrial world that both he and the agricultural capitalists of Dorchester County have betrayed.

They are also associated with Todd's own heart condition—the fact that ever since he was diagnosed with it at the end of his wartime service, he has suffered from the knowledge that "any day I may fall quickly dead, without warning—perhaps before I complete this sentence, perhaps twenty years from now" (5). Much of the "imperfect communication" that Todd regrets stems from his inability to tell his father of his own possibly premature death. That he has survived his father suggests not only an

unaccountable double inversion of the "natural" order but also a kind of cheat: his father was able to inhabit an older, better world, but by betraying that world, he destroyed his son's ability to access it and perpetuate it as a son should. Todd's highly self-conscious rebellion against the law cannot, therefore, completely conceal his own identification with that law. If the lost certainties of his father's southern world are beyond him, there is at least still fun to be had, until his own death. And in this way Todd's position resembles that of the young writer—excluded by the course of literary history from following the towering example of Faulkner, one of his literary fathers, but determined to derive an aesthetic of fun from that very exclusion, an aesthetic that would eventually be described as postmodern.

Of race, minstrelsy, and beaten biscuits

Of course, chief among the "certainties" of white upper-class southern life reflected in Faulkner's work would have been belief in the permanence of racial and class hierarchy, the conviction that African Americans are happiest and their welfare most secure when they cheerfully assume the position of servants and companions to their white benefactors. Such a belief insists on the importance of segregation but also gives paternalist whites leave to become involved in blacks' lives in ways that, however exploitative, are figured as generous; it even allows upper-class southern whites to cast themselves as defending African Americans from the attacks of depraved, resentful, poor whites (as, for instance, Will Barrett's father in The Last Gentleman believes himself pledged to do). While The Floating Opera, like Barth's work generally, does not foreground the problem of racism, its casual depiction of bigotry in Maryland and of Todd's ambivalent reaction to it suggests a position again consistent with Todd's simultaneous attraction to and rebellion against the genteel, paternalist order to which he ostensibly belongs. In short, Todd knows racism to be irrational and wrong, but he indulges in expressions of it even as he distances himself from the attitudes that usually inform these expressions.

Todd's attitude toward African Americans is akin to his attitude toward anyone who displeases a crowd. Peter Sloterdijk's notion of "cynical reason" seems apropos here, for it captures the combination of intellectual snobbery, implicit moral superiority, and conscious conformism in Todd's

practice. Enjoying the spectacle of a performer hooted off the stage at the Floating Opera, Todd tells us,

[I]t is sometimes pleasant to stone a martyr, no matter how much we may admire him. . . . I'm seldom reluctant to assist in my small way in the persecution of people who defy the crowd with their principles, especially when I'm in favor of the principles. After all, the test of one's principles is his willingness to suffer for them, and the test of this willingness—the only test—is actual suffering. What was I doing, then, but assisting T. Wallace Whittaker in the realization of his principles? (237)

Such an attitude, with its belief in the value of endurance as a mark of character, of course contradicts Todd's stated conviction that "nothing has intrinsic value" (169), but such contradiction emerges elsewhere in the novel too—for instance, Todd's choosing not to reveal to his friend Harrison Mack Jr. the news that would result in his inheriting \$3 million until he has determined to his own satisfaction whether Harrison possesses sufficient "strength of character" to deserve it (146). In Sloterdijk's words, the cynic possesses

enlightened false consciousness . . . that modernized, unhappy consciousness . . . [that] has learned its lessons in enlightenment, but it has not, and probably was not able to, put them into practice. Well-off and miserable at the same time, this consciousness no longer feels affected by any critique of ideology; its falseness is already reflexively buffered. ¹⁸ (5)

Sloterdijk's formulation accounts for the contradictions between Todd's philosophical claims and his practice, but it also corresponds to the liberal gradualism on questions of civil rights that many "enlightened" white southerners came to profess in the 1940s and 1950s. 19 Todd's "cynical reason," which never expresses itself in anything so gauche as an outright declaration that black people are inferior or contemptible, does, however, lend itself well to the paternalist, gradualist politics that would have befitted him as a member of the southern gentility.

Todd's ambivalence about racial matters is presented against the background of the casual racism and oppressive history of Cambridge, Maryland, in the 1930s. One of the judges on the Court of Appeals is a reactionary 'Southern Democrat'" (97), and the State's Attorney is

"an avid Negro-hanger" (75). Cambridge's High Street, in contrast to the "rather unattractive" aspect of the rest of the town, includes not just stately trees and a few mansions but also "slave quarters" and "ancient names bred to idle pursuits" (54). The administrative staff at the Mack pickle factory recommends firing the union leaders and replacing them with "new niggers" (148). Most conspicuously of all, the Floating Opera, a showboat whose leading skits include minstrel acts, attracts a large crowd.

While critics have of course discussed the showboat itself as a metaphor for the novel's formal methods (following Todd's own comparison of the book to "a showboat with just one big flat open deck" that "drift[s] up and down the river on the tide" [7]), surprisingly little has been written about the racial implications of a venue whose attractions include "The Chaste & Inimitable ETHIOPIAN TIDEWATER MINSTRELS," billed as "U.S.A.'s Greatest Sable Humorists," as well as "J. Strudge. The Magnificent Ethiopian Delineator, The Black Demosthenes, in His Original Burlesque Stump Speech" (81). Seguin notes that vaudeville and blackface minstrelsy were "largely extinct in 1954 [when the novel was written], and even by 1937 [when the main events of the novel take place] no doubt endangered species" (143); the sense of "historical passing" implicit in Barth's choice of the steamboat here can therefore, I maintain, be connected to the passing of the white racial order that projected its fantasies in such forms of entertainment. Critics such as David Roediger and Eric Lott have famously traced the connections between blackface minstrelsy and the self-articulation of the white working class in the nineteenth century, but Todd's cursory survey of the audience aboard the Floating Opera reveals a mostly middle-class audience of "almost no unfamiliar faces" (231) that includes even Colonel Morton, "the richest man in Cambridge" (185). African Americans, of course, are excluded. Of the minstrel performances themselves, Todd says:

We were led by the nose through rudimentary jokes, clubbed with long-anticipated punch lines, titillated—despite the minstrels' alleged chastity—by an occasional double-entendre as ponderous as it was mild. Negroes were shiftless and ignorant, foreigners suspect; the WPA was a refuge for loafers; mothers-in-law were shrewish; women poor drivers; drunkenness was an amusing but unquestioned vice; churchgoing a soporific but

unquestioned virtue. Tambo and Bones deserved their poverty, but their rascality won our hearts, and we nodded to one another as their native wit led the overeducated interlocutor into one trap after another. Tambo and Bones vindicated our ordinariness; made us secure in the face of mere book learning; their every triumph over Mr. Interlocutor was a pat on our backs. Indeed, a double pat: for were not Tambo and Bones but irresponsible Negroes? (239)

Again, what is most striking in this passage is Todd's cynical reason: aware of the performance's ideological content and careful to show through the use of ironic diction his distance from that content, Todd nevertheless does not exclude himself from the "we" depicted here, as if to show that he is not above taking such obvious comforts when they come. If the Opera performance does suggest, as Seguin has argued, a "middlebrow logic . . . with the high being cut down by the low" (145), the southern context of the novel nevertheless suggests a capacious middle indeed, one defined against African Americans and reminiscent of what W.J. Cash calls the "proto-Dorian" bond (84). If elsewhere in the novel Todd's more specific position as a gentleman-lawyer comes more to the fore, the Opera allows a kind of staging of the illusory brotherhood of all southern whites. The fact that Todd attempts to blow himself up along with the "six hundred ninety-nine of [his] townspeople" (246) in the audience might thus be seen in a political as well as a psychoanalytic light: if Todd can put an end to the uncertainty of when his heart will stop by committing suicide, the extension of this suicide to mass murder will also put an end to the once fondly held but also increasingly incredible (and resented) tenets of the southern racial order.

Todd stresses the entire community's participation in the showboat's ritual of white racial solidarity, but his own interactions with African Americans also reveal his simultaneous commitment to and rejection of white racial privilege. In his efforts to help Harrison win his lawsuit against his mother, he enlists the aid of Eustacia Callader, Harrison's "mammy," who plays the role of the dim-witted but affectionate and sexualized black woman exactly as Todd hopes; she helps him in exchange for small bribes and "a buss on the cheek" (105). Todd also scandalizes his friend Harrison by telling him that because Dorothy Minter, "a plump Negro girl of eighteen," is too poor to pay him for his services in arrang-

ing a divorce for her, he "take[s] it out in trade" (39). (Indeed, he even gets Dorothy to brush "her skirt flutteringly" in Harrison's presence and say "Whatever you say, Mister Andrews" [40].) By flaunting the idea of white male sexual privilege even as he shows that he does not take advantage of it, Todd both exposes a widespread injustice and asserts his possible claim to it. When Dorothy's husband, Junior, sends Todd threatening letters after the divorce because he believes that Dorothy has become Todd's mistress, Todd only hopes that "Junior would not be foolish enough to carry out his threat" because "[o]ur State's Attorney, Jarman James, was an avid Negro-hanger, and it would have distressed me to present him with such an easy case" (75). ²⁰ Again, Todd's language suggests a rueful acknowledgment that Junior may have a legitimate grievance against him, combined with a willingness to use force against Junior if necessary.

That Todd finally seems more committed to the privileges associated with white southerners despite his occasional critiques of them (critiques that, again, are to a certain degree permissible for gentleman-lawyers) is evident in one of the novel's few unqualified paeans to a local pleasure:

I recommend three Maryland beaten biscuits, with water, for your breakfast. They are hard as a haul-seiner's conscience and dry as a dredger's tongue, and they sit for hours in your morning stomach like ballast on a tender ship's keel. They cost little, are easily and crumblessly carried in your pockets, and if forgotten and gone stale, are neither harder nor less palatable than when fresh. . . . Beaten biscuits, friend: beaten with the back of an ax on a sawn stump behind the cookhouse; you really need a slave system, I suppose, to produce the best beaten biscuits, but there is a colored lady down by the creek, next door to the dredge builder's. . . . If, like a condemned man, I had been offered my choice from man's cuisine for this my final earthly breakfast, I'd have chosen no more than what I had.

Few things are stable in this world. Your morning stomach, reader, ballasted with three Maryland beaten biscuits, will be stable. (53)

Dry, hard, subject to all kinds of abuse, yet delightful, "stable," and requiring a "slave system" to be at their best, Maryland beaten biscuits, for all the lightness of this passage, appear as Todd's truest image of the good life. The irony cannot quite overcome the yearning.

The Floating Opera, then, appears as a southern novel both because in the figure of Todd it depicts the simultaneous attraction to and critique of the racist southern social order that was becoming characteristic of white southern liberals in the 1950s and because its engagements with this order are also figured in terms of Barth's agonistic relationship with southern modernist literature of the 1930s. It seems likely that critics have not seen the extent of the novel's engagement with questions of southernness precisely because of this historical context, in which, in Duck's words, "the South's purported temporal distance, still noted and even celebrated in cultural discourse, began in many quarters to be deprived of political meaning" (216).

It should perhaps not be surprising that when Barth resurrected Todd Andrews in his massive metafictional novel LETTERS (1979), Todd became a "Stock Liberal" willing to entertain the possibility that "Everything Has Intrinsic Value" (88) and particularly willing to mock his earlier associations with southern gentility (699). He reveals that Jeannine Mack, who may be his own daughter, reminds him of "the drawling, cracker Andrewses from down-country. Misfortunate child, her redneck genes never at home in those blue-blood boarding schools and hunt clubs!" (17). When he sleeps with her, the real possibility of incest is not connected with Quentin Compson-like fantasies of maintaining pure bloodlines and chivalry but rather with "normal depraved curiosity. One more taboo over the side" (700). 21 And when he has an affair with a woman from the Upper West Side who has "a Thing about Courtly Southern Gentlemen," she is disappointed to hear from Todd "that Maryland had officially sided with the Union in the Civil War; that grits and hominy and live oaks and Spanish moss are not to be found in our latitude; that Room Service listed no mint juleps among their nightcaps." Todd consoles her by telling her that "our part of Maryland had been staunchly Confederate . . . and had enjoyed its latest Negro lynching well within her lifetime" (84–85). By the late 1970s, after all, de jure segregation had been successfully challenged, a certain "stock liberalism" had come to define much mainstream political thinking, and white southerners who identified themselves with a traditional, pseudoaristocratic identity had become much more defensive. In transforming Todd into a good liberal, however, Barth empties ties out LETTERS of many of the tensions that had made The Floating Opera so compelling. Whereas the earlier novel provides an oblique but nevertheless illuminating meditation on the crises of traditional notions

of southernness and of the perceived end of modernism—crises associated with Barth's own efforts to make a name for himself as a writer—the later novel, protected against such crises by its blithe assurance that everything can be contained and redeemed by a metafictive frame, proves altogether unsatisfying. In this sense, his victory over the burdens of the southern literary past is of dubious value. The Faulkner who maintained (through the southern lawyer Gavin Stevens) "The past is never dead. It isn't even past" (Requiem 92) would probably not have been surprised.²²

Notes

- 1. The conservatism of these preoccupations is evident, and Brooks, along with Louis D. Rubin Jr., C. Hugh Holman, Frederick Hoffman, and other southernist critics influenced by the Agrarians of the 1930s, did much to promote the idea that southern literature is opposed to the liberal individualism of American literature as a whole—a conception that has been substantively challenged only in the last two decades. For a summary of how these critics shaped the development of southern literary studies and were subsequently challenged, see Ladd.
- 2. Though he has identified himself as a liberal in his essays, he continually presents this stance as little more than the impulses of a decent man, rejecting any claims that either his duty or his inclination requires him to engage with politics. He refers in passing to "us liberal Democrats" in "The Literature of Exhaustion" when the essay was published in the *Atlantic Monthly* (34), but when it was collected in *The Friday Book* the phrase becomes "us liberal democrats" (75), as if to dilute the political charge of the phrase.
- 3. Gardner argues that Barth's first two novels

are weakened to the point of collapse by vulgarities of style and opinions that will not survive scrutiny, chiefly the "elitist" notion, as Fowles says, that life is absurd, a notion implying that justifications for human actions must be imposed upon, not discovered within, human nature. (94)

However, Gardner also praises these novels for their "strong sense of place."

4. Barth later expressed dissatisfaction with this formulation, but his intended corrective, the 1979 essay "The Literature of Replenishment," conveyed much the same idea in more polite terms:

In 1966/67 we scarcely had the term postmodernism in its current literary-critical usage . . . but a number of us, in quite different ways

and with varying combinations of intuitive response and conscious deliberation, were already well into the working out, not of the next-best thing after modernism, but of the best next thing: what is gropingly now called postmodernist fiction; what I hope might also be thought of one day as a literature of replenishment. (206; Barth's italics).

- 5. Duck argues that much southern modernist writing "exposed the degree to which southern racial practices corresponded, rather than conflicted, with those of the larger nation," thus demonstrating how "cultural forms considered anachronistic could coexist in often vital relationships with those recognized as central to modernization" (7). Duck's investigation in some respects rewrites and complicates the distinction between "modernizers and monumentalists" that Richard King had proposed in A Southern Renaissance (39)—two camps of southern writers and intellectuals who count as modernists but whose political orientations can be broadly correlated to stereotyped views of national/liberal and white southern/conservative values.
- 6. For a summary of the notion of the postsouthern see Kreyling 148-55.
- 7. Patricia Tobin offers the most sustained Bloomian reading of Barth's career, but with a crucial difference: Barth

conducts his self-inventions within the Bloomian schema of oedipal conflict—not inventing himself, like Whitman, once and for all in a miraculous conception aimed at public consumption, but rather reinventing himself with each new work of art, as new ephebe to his own precursor, in order that the career might go on. (9)

Granting that this schema will not account for *The Floating Opera* because it is Barth's first novel, Tobin proposes James Joyce (and specifically the Stephen Daedalus of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*) as "Barth's temporary and well-chosen precursor" (32). I hope to show why Faulkner (and Quentin Compson) make more sense as precursors.

- 8. Martyn Bone makes a similar point about the southern Agrarians: "To the degree that the Agrarians during the 1930s formulated a radical conservative critique of capitalism, they have more in common with contemporary leftists than neoconservative idolaters of the free market" (49–50).
- 9. On Eliot's influence on Tate in particular, see Cowan 63-94 and Underwood 62-65.
- 10. On the relationship between Agrarianism and New Criticism, see Bové 113-42, Kreyling 33-55, and Bone 27-34. On the southern exodus from farms, see Wright 240-45.

- 11. On Tate's role as a cultural spokesman see Huff 83-86.
- 12. Anthony Wilson's *Shadow and Shelter* traces the oscillation between the swamp figured as "the always present but always denied underside of the myth of pastoral Eden that defined the antebellum South" and the swamp seen as "the last pure vestige of undominated but ever threatened Southern ecoculture, the last bulwark against Southern absorption into the undifferentiated and commodified mass of American culture" (ix). Barth's description of wetland here draws on the latter possibility, which Wilson examines in twentieth-century southern texts such as Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses* (Wilson 149–62) and Linda Hogan's *Power* (Wilson 188–93).
- 13. Jameson's view of the cooptation of the high modernists by a changed postwar situation does not mention Faulkner, but it is consistent with the account proposed in Lawrence H. Schwartz's *Creating Faulkner's Reputation*, in which Faulkner's rise to international fame in the late 1940s had much to do with the utility of his novels to a liberal anti-Communist politics. For a more positive view of Faulkner's later novels that emphasizes their subversive, parodic nature, see Kreyling 147.
- 14. "A Southern Mode" includes Tate's loving portrait of the gentleman-law-yer, whom he identifies as the "Southern public *persona*":

the old gentleman in Kentucky who sat every afternoon in his front yard under an old sugar tree, reading Cicero's letters to Atticus. When the hands suckering the tobacco in the adjoining field needed orders, he kept his place in the book with his forefinger, walked out into the field, and then returned to his reading under the shade of the tree. He was also a lawyer, and occasionally he went to his office, which was over the feed store in the county seat. (587–88)

- 15. On the persistence of representations of the gentleman-lawyer in filmic as well as literary art, see Cauthen and Alpin.
- 16. Nineteenth-century exemplars of this type can be found in the figures of Frank Meriwether, from John Pendleton Kennedy's 1832 novel Swallow Barn, and Captain Porgy, from William Gilmore Simms's Woodcraft. Twentieth-century successors include Ashley Wilkes, from Margaret Mitchell's Gone with the Wind, and Daniel Ponder, from Eudora Welty's The Ponder Heart.
- 17. I do not mean to suggest, as many southern apologists have, that the plantation economy was essentially feudal and that the systems of slavery and tenant sharecropping were therefore analogous to the European division of labor during the Middle Ages. That plantation agriculture was capitalist through and

through—albeit an exceedingly inefficient form of capitalism whose eventual supersession was perhaps inevitable—has been demonstrated by, among others, James Oakes (40–56). Nevertheless, the trope of a feudal South was powerful, and in presenting us with two southern planters who are simultaneously industrial capitalists, Barth certainly emphasizes this irony.

- 18. Conti has also noted the connections between Todd's reasoning and Sloter-dijk's description; see 133-34.
- 19. On liberal gradualism among white southern novelists in the civil rights era, see my essay "Elizabeth Spencer" 561-69.
- 20. In the original manuscript draft of *The Floating Opera*, Todd calls Jarman James "an avid negro-hanger, whom I detested for no particular reason" (John Barth Papers carton 1, folder ch. 4–9, ch. 9, p. 146). The revision here seems significant: if Todd's disdain for James can be connected to James's racism instead of being apparently arbitrary, then the cynicism of Todd's position becomes clearer. Todd does not actually attribute his dislike of the man to his racism in the published version, but he allows the reader to draw the expected conclusion.
- 21. On the importance of incest as a "utopian" fantasy of maintaining pure blood—one associated with the southern gothic but which might also serve as a cipher for nativist anxieties—see Walter Benn Michaels 10–12.
- 22. My assessment of the value of *The Floating Opera* in comparison with Barth's later metafiction is much the same as Chris Conti's: "the more sophisticated his narratives have become the fewer signs of life they seem to possess. While his metafictional method intends creative open-endedness . . . the result is, so to speak, open-endlessness" (127).

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Fearful Symmetry: Salman Rushdie and Prophetic Newness

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n Salman Rushdie's The Satanic Verses a disembodied voice asks, "How does newness come into the world? How is it born?" (8). The question, as subsequent events make clear, is as much about the novel itself and what Rushdie had to do to enter the world, to make headlines, attract attention, and mobilize masses, as it is about the world. Of the two most common answers to the question of newness given by critics, one reads with the text and the other against it. Postcolonial critics Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, and Simon Gikandi identify the newness that the novel refers to with the immigrants from South Asia and the Caribbean in London, those who, in the process of reinventing themselves, are also reinventing what it means to be British. According to the postcolonial reading, antiauthoritarian social progress arises as a function of mimicry, repeating the colonizer but with a difference, and of hybridity, the liminal position between the culture of origin and the host culture, which affords the migrant a stereoscopic view that encompasses both. The second, more cynical, answer, offered by Andrew Wernick, is that newness is a question of strategic positioning in the market for high literature, which obeys the laws of other capitalist markets. Rushdie is able to promote himself and his product by making the product seem like other trusted commodities but with a desirable distinctness of its own.

The new Britons and the relentless novelty demanded by the marketplace are not, however, the only new things in the novel. Other forms of being, equally new, perhaps equally modern, are also competing for hegemony: the militant Islam of the Imam, the Sikh nationalism of the terrorist hijackers, and the radical aesthetic of popular music and culture.

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Some in the novel feel that Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher represents "Newness coming into this country" (270): pace Bhabha, no one ever said that the emergent new had to be something we wanted! As Fatima Mernissi points out and Rushdie implicitly recognizes, the reign of the Ayatollah Khomeini, on whom the character of the Imam is based, is itself a "twentieth-century innovation" (24). And meanwhile, in a remote backwater in India, a young woman is promising to lead converts through the sea on a pilgrimage to Mecca. Ignored by television cameras and ignorant of modern science and politics, will Ayesha, not the global movements of peoples, consumer spectacle, or the neoliberal politicians and fundamentalist terrorists who fill the news, be the new thing that takes over the world? After all, such a thing happened before, 1300 years ago, when a businessman received a revelation from God and changed the world.

Gikandi reads Salman the Persian, who in the novel is a disciple of the Prophet who loses his faith, as "defining the author's critical stance toward both empire and nation" (211), as if Rushdie's interest in seventh-century Arabia were solely as an allegory of contemporary postcolonialism. Gikandi and Bhabha assume that because the Prophet stands for the one opposed to the many, the pure as opposed to the mixed, he also represents the old against which the new must define itself. The Prophet, however, is better understood as the novel's premier example of newness successfully entering the world. Mahound, Rushdie's Prophet figure, is one of those who hear a voice in their ear asking, "What kind of idea are you?" (Satanic 95). According to Maxime Rodinson, whose biography was a direct source for Rushdie's novel, the historical Prophet

was able to identify himself with the victims of society and make their suffering his own; and he rounded on the men of the existing establishment to call them to account and break down the ideology which served as the justification for their position. (82)

The novel admires the challenge that Mahound poses to the corrupt status quo of his time even as it abhors his intolerance and misogyny. Rushdie assumes that any emerging idea, including his own, that seeks to enter the world would do well to study how rival ideas, even inimical ones, have done so before.

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Part of the difficulty that critics of the novel have had with recognizing the Prophet's newness is that newness in Jahilia, Rushdie's version of seventh-century Arabia, seems to differ from newness now. For one of seventil containing there is more magic in the novel's contemporary Britain than in its Arabia 1300 years ago (though it has also become harder to make people believe in that magic). In the seventh century, a prophet can convince others that he can communicate with angels, but in London there is actual shape-shifting: one character sprouts horns and a tail and becomes a devil; another becomes an angel. To explore the condition of the contemporary postcolonial migrants, Rushdie makes literal what Gillian Gane calls the "metaphors of migrant identity—compressed, dramatized analogues of how migrants change" (31). When men fall from the sky and are transformed into monsters, the literalized metaphors convey the extremity, seeming randomness, anxiety, and excitement of cultural change. The tropes borrowed from myth and religion that are so prominent in the sections of the novel set in contemporary Britain or India are conspicuously absent in the sections set in Jahilia. In those sections, which debunk myth and religion, the newness that was Islam is stripped of its magic and explained, perhaps even explained away. Where the Prophet saw himself at the historical cusp where time was divided into before and after, error and truth, old and new, the novel in which the Prophet figures expresses a more properly historical consciousness, according to which the world is always changing, but according to principles that remain the same. This historicism exhorts us to expect the unpredictable but, as Ian Hacking puts it, to "expect human nature to be pretty much the same any place, any time" (220).

Yet, in spite of the differences in narration—present-day London, familiar as a realist setting, is rendered wonderfully magical, and the past, ruled by divine authority, is depicted in terms of psychological realism—in spite of the incommensurability that would seem to favor the newest new thing, the novel presents newness then as more of an absolute break with what came before—more absolutely new—than newness now. As John Ball's study of postcolonial London argues, Rushdie believes that "the renewal of urban space and society is best achieved gradually and organically, through accretion and adaptation" (209). In Eugene Dumsday, The Satanic Verses offers fierce satire of creationists who imagine that creation occurs ex nihilo and once and for all. But Darwinian evolutionary principles only apply to change now. The newness of an idea such as

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Mahound's does not appear to be a matter of accretion and adaptation, of hybridity and mimicry, but rather of the overthrow of one order by another. Newness then we might more properly call revolution. And, I will argue, Rushdie is too firm a believer in his own genius to credit it to random mutation: he understands his originality as something closer to mutation-inducing radiation—something like prophecy.

Newness then and newness now differ crucially in the questions that are asked of each. The great contemporary postcolonial migrations pose a question about identity: is the self fundamentally continuous, or is it fluid, hybrid, and endlessly invented? To be or to become is the question. Mahound's new idea, however, is faced with very different questions, about survival and hegemony:

WHAT KIND OF AN IDEA ARE YOU? Are you the kind that compromises, does deals, accommodates itself to society, aims to find a niche, to survive; or are you the cussed, bloody-minded, ramrod-backed type of damnfool notion that would rather break than sway with the breeze?—The kind that will almost certainly, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, be smashed to bits; but, the hundredth time, will change the world. (335)

And when such a new idea does achieve hegemony, it is asked a second question: how tolerant will it be of other ideas? Persistence or adaptation, in this case, is not a question posed to the old by new circumstances, as it is for Britain's immigrants, but a question asked of the new by the old. The questions asked of the Prophet's new idea reflect a Gramscian concern with emergence, history, and power. They are the questions asked of revolutions, like the Sandinistas', which Rushdie reported on while writing *The Satanic Verses*. They are not concerned with time that is like all other time but with what Philip Fisher calls

the phase between the start-up of an idea that, so it is claimed, might just change everything, and the full acceptance or final rejection of the idea, the moment when its promise is, at last, either realized or exposed as empty. (12)

Before I examine prophetic newness in the novel, let me briefly consider the two other kinds of newness found in it: the postcolonial operations of hybridity and mimicry and the drive for originality in the literary marketplace.

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postcolonial newness

Outside of his novel, Rushdie answers its question thus: "Mélange, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that is how newness enters the world. It is the great possibility that mass migration gives the world, and I have tried to embrace it" ("In Good Faith" 394). This mixing we can call postcolonial hybridity, even if this particular description is somewhat anodyne. In The Satanic Verses Rushdie's celebration of hybridity is accompanied by a savage satire of purity, especially as represented by the figure of the Imam, an unhappy exile longing to return to a country in his own image. Where purity longs to fix the world according to known categories, hybridity challenges existing categories by producing hitherto unknown configurations that feel new. What already exists is repeated in new contexts and new combinations that change its meaning and force.

Mimicry is another form of repetition with an irreducible difference. Taking the traditional image of the black devil that is frequently wielded against them, immigrant youth in contemporary Britain adopt it as their own, thus standing it on its head. They unlock the countercultural potential of what is called in *The Satanic Verses* "this what-else-after-all-but-black-man, maybe a little twisted up by fate class race history, all that, but getting off his behind, bad and mad, to kick a little ass" (286).

This is not, however, what Bhabha means by mimicry. Bhabha champions the subversive potential of mimicking the colonizer because the irreducible difference that makes imitation less than complete also underlines the performative nature of colonialism itself and renders it unstable. For him, mimicry inevitably reveals Englishness as a role that the English perform no less than the Indians do. In *The Satanic Verses*, however, mimicry of the colonizer is never subversive. At best it is compromising and at worst soul destroying. In Saladin Chamcha, whose family name means toady or flatterer, and who makes a career of speaking like a perfect Englishman, Rushdie repeats the trope, familiar from postcolonial literature of the 1960s and 70s, of the colonial mimic as a debilitating figure. When he metamorphoses into a devil, Saladin is not being self-consciously subversive like London's radical black youth; he is losing control of his English manner of walking and talking.

Until Bhabha made it central to his theory of colonial resistance, mimicry had been a staple of postcolonial satire, the mark of the failure of the colonized to produce anything genuinely new. This is the sense

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of the term as used by V. S. Naipaul in *The Mimic Men*, where imitation of form by those without power suggests that the colonial is not, in fact, authentic. Other writers too, with stronger postcolonial credentials than Naipaul, such as Ngugi, Soyinka, Sembène, and Césaire, satirize postcolonial politicians for imitating the colonizers or the West. Such mimicry is never a source of the new. Quite the opposite: at the end of Rushdie's novel, the only solution for a mimic man like Saladin is to return to roots and rediscover his Indian self. Gikandi, for one, critiques the way the novel suggests that a return to the homeland is desirable or even possible (223–24).

The fierceness of Rushdie's satire of the colonial mimic man may reflect that the target is precariously close to home. Vijay Mishra finds "striking parallels between Saladin and his creator" (120): like Chamcha, Rushdie worked in advertising, and Chamcha's marriage to Pamela Lovelace is a version of his creator's marriage to Clarissa Luard. Rushdie's most hostile readers have even derided him as Simon Rushton, a would-be aristocratic Englishman (as reported by Rushdie, "In Good Faith" 405). The satirist's own mimicry, however, is distinguished from his character's by its self-consciousness. Pierre Bourdieu suggests that "conscious" (as opposed to "naive") authors create characters who resemble them in every significant way except that the characters could not themselves write the books in which they appear. By imagining the social, political, and aesthetic fields that contain him and threaten to render him powerless, an author is "able to produce himself as a creator, that is, as the subject of his own creation" and so contain the field (104). The false mimic wants only to pass for English and is an object of satire; the subversive mimic makes mimicry his theme. In contrast to Saladin's, Rushdie's mimicry draws attention to itself and thus to the performative nature of all identity. Inside the text, Saladin's mimicry is a failure; outside, Rushdie's exemplifies the subversive mimicry that Bhabha celebrates. I will argue that this doubling between inside and outside, between self and demonic other, is key to how prophetic newness enters the world as well.

Making it new: Entering the literary marketplace

The Satanic Verses is filled with textual borrowing. It elaborately invokes, for instance, Othello, "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," and Our Mutual Friend, helping Rushdie speak about race and contemporary London. It

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also retells the hadith, the canonical stories of the Prophet, but here the mimicry is closer to parody and more obviously hostile. A third kind of literary repetition, more foundational but not foregrounded (perhaps because the debt is so great) is Rushdie's relation to Brecht, Genet, Joyce, and Bulgakov. If the novel's question about newness is broadly about the world, therefore, it is more narrowly about Rushdie's own art: how does the writer obey Ezra Pound's injunction to "make it new"—express its difference from all that has preceded it and so enter the tradition that it supplants?

Rushdie's thematization of mimicry is meant to win him a place among those he imitates—Shakespeare, Blake, Dickens; Borges, Calvino, Bulgakov (even, I will argue, the Prophet)—those who are imitated by others, even as they themselves can be seen as the best imitators.² The novel isn't a direct confirmation of a literary tradition but rather an attempt to subvert it and then thoroughly to reconstitute it with himself as an integral part—what Bhabha describes as "a process of iterative 'unpicking' and incommensurable, insurgent relinking" (185). As my reference to Pound suggests, however, it is not always easy to distinguish Rushdie's postcolonial rewriting from modernist allusion and postmodernist pastiche.

We can see in Rushdie's thematization of his own mimicry in *The Satanic Verses* a particularly sophisticated example of what Greg Urban calls "metaculture"—that is, "culture that is about culture" (3), including forms like film reviews and literary criticism, which impart "an accelerative force to culture" and assist "culture in its motion through space and time" (4). What Urban calls "metaculture" Wernick calls "promotion": "any act or process of communication that serves to stimulate the circulation of something in the context of its competitive exchange" (88). When, for instance, Rushdie reviews a new work by Thomas Pynchon, "the reluctantly constituted publicity value of both literary names becomes the occasion for a further round of publicity in which the drawing power of each serves to promote the books and reputations of the other" (89).

The participation in an economy of exchange, however, creates anxieties similar to those aroused by colonial mimicry. Imitation, mechanical reproduction, simulacra—these are also the hallmarks of postmodernist pastiche. In *The Satanic Verses* the hijackers of Air India Flight 420 from Bombay "want to behave the way they have seen hijackers behaving in the movies and on TV; they are reality aping a crude image of itself, they

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are worms swallowing their tails" (78). At best, such imitation propagates and preserves dead forms. At worst, it hollows out the world, depleting its Benjaminian aura. In *The Satanic Verses*, the countercultural potential of the black devil is itself quickly coopted by capitalism's insatiable appetite for the new:

Asian retailers and manufacturers of button-badges sweatshirts posters understood the power of the dream, and then all of a sudden he [the devil] was everywhere, on the chests of young girls and in the windows protected against bricks by metal grilles. (286)

Writing about an advertising campaign for Macintosh computers that features a photograph of Mahatma Gandhi and the caption "Think different," Rushdie echoes Jameson's critique of postmodernism as the cultural logic of late capitalism. Gandhi, laments Rushdie, has

become abstract, ahistorical, postmodern, no longer a man in and of his time but a free-floating concept, a part of the available stock of cultural symbols, an image that can be borrowed, used, distorted, reinvented, to fit many different purposes, and to the devil with historicity or truth. (Step 166)

Of course, that last phrase—"to the devil with historicity or truth"—is ironic coming from the author of *The Satanic Verses*, where the devilnarrator treats the Prophet (as in an earlier novel, *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie treated Gandhi) precisely as an image that can be "borrowed, used, distorted, and reinvented."

What Rushdie objects to in the Macintosh ad is not its disrespect for the Mahatma but rather the way Gandhi is made to serve Mammon. About his time working in advertising while writing Midnight's Children, Rushdie tells Terry Gilliam,

whenever anyone asks me what the influence of advertising was on my work I say, "Nothing": I used to work Thursdays [sic] to Fridays, and then I'd come home Friday night and have a really long bath. Kind of wash it off. And then wake up Saturday morning and be a writer. (102)

Rushdie's 2001 novel Fury charges:

Back in the seventies, when Sara gave up the serious life for the frivolous, working in ad-land had been slightly shameful. You confessed it to your friends with lowered voice and downcast eyes. Advertising was a confidence trick, a cheat, the notorious enemy of promise. It was—a horrible thought in that era—nakedly capitalist. Selling things was *low*. Now everyone—eminent writers, great painters, architects, politicians—wanted to be in on the act. Reformed alcoholics plugged booze. Everyone, as well as everything, was for sale. (33)

In Fury New York is but a version of Plato's Cave, where all that survives of ideas is shimmering shadows. Instead of the artist's ideas breathing life into matter, the material world suffocates ideas and plays games with their corpses. The real danger to the new is that it will sink utterly into the world as the world already is.

It is tempting to read Rushdie's denunciations of materiality like those of Saladin's mimicry: as attempts to deflect attention away from the self. Before the Satanic Verses affair erupted, Rushdie had, after all, already caused a small scandal by leaving his longtime editor and friend, Liz Calder, for the agent Andrew Wylie, who could promise him contracts worth millions. Wernick has shown how Rushdie himself inevitably participates in the circulating flows of capitalism—"There is no horspromotion," he concludes (101)—and dismisses the writer's attempts to distinguish between his art and advertising: "the problem posed by the late capitalist cultural economy for the production and interchange of ideas, expressions and visions" is that "whatever is publicly inscribed necessarily participates in heteronomous processes of circulatory competition," and "there is no way for an author to avoid this problem" (101). And Liam Connell draws attention to how Rushdie's novel transforms "protest against the internationalisation of capital into an accommodation with or a valorisation of capital in other forms" (179). My argument, however, is not that Rushdie is engaged in mystification but that colonial mimicry and postmodernist pastiche do not exhaust his novel, and he struggles to extricate himself from both of them. If his distinction between debilitating colonial and postmodern mimicry and his own regenerative kind is clearer in practice than in theory, that may be a comment on the state of theory.

In The Satanic Verses, most imitation by advertisers and consumers,

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but also by politicians, terrorists, and colonial mimic men, merely registers the forces already at work in the world, but some imitations—including, perhaps, Rushdie's own—are nodes of such power that they impart new motion to the world around them. Although he objects to Apple's appropriation of Gandhi as an icon, Rushdie also admires how "posthumous, exalted 'international Gandhi' has evidently become a totem of real, inspirational force" capable of inspiring resistance movements around the world (Step Across This Line 167). This iconic Gandhi, Rushdie assures us, is not more historical or truer than the Macintosh Mahatma, but it is more valuable. And it is my claim that Rushdie wants some of this prophetic force for himself.

Prophetic newness

As we have noted, ideas that entered the world were once asked how far they would bend to accommodate the world. Before Mahound's own new idea can change the way people live, in a moment of despair he falters and, in the eponymous incident of the so-called Satanic Verses, receives permission from the archangel Gibreel to make room in his monotheism for the politically convenient presence of three pagan goddesses. He hopes thereby to bring his enemies into the fold but finds that all he has done is win a place for his idea among other ideas. To the deep disappointment of his new disciples, the emergent idea that would contain and so renew the world contents itself with a place in the world as it already exists. Mahound has failed the first question. When his compromise proves damaging, the angel Gibreel returns on-message, however, and the Prophet issues a retraction that attributes the previous and now undesirable revelation to the inspiration of the devil.

The original revelation and its retraction both issue from the same source, neither angel nor devil: both are Mahound's projections. The Prophet's will fills the angel and makes his own words pour from the angel's mouth, a process that Gibreel, from whose perspective the incident is related, feels as a violation: "From my mouth, both the statement and the repudiation, verses and converses, universes and reverses, the whole thing, and we all know how my mouth got worked" (123).

Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère rightly reads the Satanic Verses incident in the novel as "an intricate allegory of writing" (189). No transcendence, no ultimate origin, only an emptiness onto which the

prophet projects his desire. The Prophet's message is thus no different in that respect from any other: Mahound is not a genuine messenger, and there is no divine message. I will argue, however, that, as an "intricate allegory of writing," the Satanic Verses episode is also an allegory of Rushdie's own writing process. The episode does not just show that there are no transcendent origins; it also exemplifies the power of the imagination to bring into being something truly new.

Rushdie borrowed the Satanic Verses incident from Rodinson's biography, which in turn derived it from the hadith. Rushdie also borrows two other stories from the hadith by way of Rodinson: one, the story of the scribe whose faith in the Revelation is shaken when he mistranscribes Mahound's dictation of the Quran, and the interpolations go unnoticed by the Prophet (Rodinson 219); and the other, where the Prophet's youngest wife, Ayesha, is exonerated of sexual indiscretion by the archangel himself (199–204). Repeatedly, revelation appears as projection, subject to human desire. The subjects of the Satanic Verses, the mistranscription of the Quran, and Ayesha's rumored infidelity have a long, somewhat turbulent history in Muslim tradition as well as in anti-Muslim orientalist polemic. They are not new, although Rushdie renews them by giving them unusual prominence and recounting them in crude language. It is just possible that Rushdie could have got away with recounting these scenes as Rodinson, a self-professed atheist, does: as part of a project to apply to the hadith the principles of what nineteenth-century Biblical interpretation called "the higher criticism" in order to arrive at a more just measure of the Prophet's achievement. In a discussion critical of Rushdie, M. A. R. and Tracy Habib write, "there is surely nothing offensive in all of this ... Rushdie has merely expressed his disillusionment with religion" (22). And certainly the scenes that cast doubt on the divine source of the Quran prompted less outrage than the scene, derived not from Muslim tradition or from Rodinson but from Genet's The Balcony, where the poet-satirist Baal, taking refuge from the Prophet's fury in a brothel called The Curtain, has the bright idea of giving the whores the names of the Prophet's wives in order to titillate patrons.3

Rushdie answers the question he says used to be asked of all new ideas—"What kind of idea are you?"—by putting Baal and Mahound side by side and saying in effect: "There, that is the kind of idea I am: modern, hybrid, sceptical, and mimic." Baal cries out to the Prophet, "Whores and writers, Mahound. We are the people you can't forgive" (392), echoing

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Rodinson, who writes of Mohammed, "those he could not forgive were the propagandists who had mocked and made fun of him in songs and verses" (261). Baal's parodic repetition of the Prophet partakes in what Urban calls a culture of modernity, in which exact replication is less valued than the spirit of newness itself and the qualities associated with it; irreverence, transgression, skepticism, irony, humor, and tolerance. Baal's new kind of brothel may appear less ambitious than Mahound's new religion, but its limited claims are precisely the source of its power. If we consider the Prophet's and the poet's ideas as what Richard Dawkins calls memes—as replicators whose energies are devoted to reproducing and spreading themselves—then the poet's culture of modernity is arguably the more successful, because the Prophet's idea is always vulnerable to deviations in the form of words or gestures, while the poet's will take as many forms as there are people. Because he cannot trust the replication of his idea by others to be faithful to his original inspiration, Mahound must forever police them. Baal, on the other hand, abhors how the new monotheism reserves newness for Mahound alone, reducing all who come after to mere copies of the Prophet's original. Baal's (and by implication, Rushdie's) idea succeeds not when others repeat it exactly but when others make it their own. In that sense his culture of modernity is even more spiritual than the prophet's culture of tradition: he relies on others repeating not his words but the idea behind the words, not the letter but the spirit.

When Baal sets the Prophet and his story in a brothel, he is being entirely faithful to the spirit of Rushdie, his creator, who has, after all, conceived the project of recounting the Revelation in a profane novel. The brothel scene, the source of deepest offense in the novel, is but a synecdoche for that project, and thus those who read out or photocopied and circulated the brothel scene out of context in order to fan the flames of indignation were, in a certain way, not unfairly misrepresenting the novel but going to the heart of the matter. Rushdie also makes his namesake, the historical figure of Salman the Persian, both the scribe who mistranscribes the Quran⁴ and the disciple who spreads the rumors of Ayesha's infidelity. The most scandalous elements of the novel have an important element of self-reflexivity built into them. Rushdie never just blasphemes; he always proclaims, "Hey! This is me blaspheming here!"

Anthony Julius makes a distinction between two kinds of transgressive art. One, inspired by the Enlightenment, wages war against the forces

of ignorance and superstition in order to improve the world. The other, mistrustful of the Enlightenment as itself but a modern superstition, revels in transgression for its own sake (148–67). In the twentieth century, for a work to enter the canon of world literature, it seems it must first cause scandal—that is, force an entry into the sphere of culture ruled by journalism or law. Think of the famous trials—Wilde, Lawrence, Joyce, Miller, Nabokov—and the rush of other writers to testify at them. Beauty and truth—even newness—are never enough: the postmodernist who would introduce newness into the world must also find new ways of coming to public attention. Long before *The Satanic Verses*, the author had successfully invited libel suits, censorship, and celebrity scandal. The simplest explanation for the force with which Rushdie's novel entered the world is that he had found in blasphemy a novel source of transgression.

Iulius invokes the author of The Satanic Verses as an example of transgression for its own sake, but it seems clear that Rushdie thinks of himself as the first kind of transgressor, one who wages war on the enemies of Enlightenment. If one goal of Rushdie's fiction has always been épater les bourgeois, to shock the complacent and the puritanical, another is écraser l'infâme, to fight against the lies wielded by religious, political, and social authority. "Literature and religion . . . fight for the same territory," he writes ("In Good Faith" 408), and so do "writers and politicians" ("Imaginary Homelands" 14). He is an intellectual in the sense given to the term by the Enlightenment: one who, in the words of Zygmunt Bauman, sees it as a "moral responsibility, and [a] right, to interfere directly with the political process through influencing the minds of the nation and moulding the actions of its political leaders" (1). Enlightenment intellectuals, for Bauman, thought that "Social reality is made up of ideas, which fight some ideas, fertilize other ideas and give birth to yet more ideas, while human beings suffer because of wrong ideas and eventually get saved by good ones" (106). Rushdie is at once anti-Prophet and rival Prophet.

Pierre François applauds *The Satanic Verses* for its Darwin-inspired materialist vision of the world, according to which newness solely arises from the interaction of bodies and things (310–11), but Rushdie is more of an idealist than a materialist, as interested in the force of Darwin's idea as in the forces of evolution. The question "How does newness *enter* the world?" presumes, after all, that newness comes from outside the world. Where the Quran tells of a Revelation, Rushdie prefers to speak of an idea: Mahound, who is asked what kind of idea he is, does not just *have*

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a new idea; he is a new idea. And Rushdie, the apostle of secularism and impurity is, I am arguing, as committed as the Prophet was to the progress of the intangible through the world.

Baal's brothel parody is as fierce as it is because Baal wants some of the Prophet's power. In Genet's *The Balcony* the Chief of Police dreams of entering the sexual fantasies of others as fully as the Bishop and the Judge have done. Rushdie's Prophet has so entered the world that he too has infiltrated the fantasies of brothel goers (and come into the firing range of satirists like Baal). Genet's brothel goer whose fantasy involves dressing as the Bishop genuinely seeks saintliness; he who plays the Judge has a real concern for justice; and the poet who plays the Prophet in Rushdie's brothel wants the power to set the world on fire. While playing the Prophet in the brothel, Baal recognizes with horror that he is not separable from what he fears: he "had fallen prey to the seductions of becoming the secret, profane mirror of Mahound" (384).

In a flash of insight, Baal sees himself "standing beside myself. And I can make the standing one speak; then I get up and write down his verses" (385). In other words, Mahound plays for Baal the role that the angel Gibreel plays for Mahound. By wrestling with the persona of Mahound, just as Mahound wrestled with the angel—or is it the devil?—Baal finds he can overcome his impotence, which is also his crippling writer's block. The brothel scene, that image of the novel as a whole, is in this way another version of the Satanic Verses episode itself, that "intricate allegory of writing."

If the point of that episode, as Dutheil de la Rochère suggests, is that the Prophet is no better than the novelist, it also casts him as a novelist. Rushdie follows Rodinson's lead in comparing Muhammad's prophecy "to the inspiration of the writer" (Rodinson 93). Similarly, discussing the historical incident of the mistranscription of the Quran, Italo Calvino concludes the scribe was wrong to lose his faith: "He lost his faith in Allah because he lacked faith in writing, and in himself as an agent of writing" (182).

Mahound, like Baal, takes the world as he finds it, in particular the political tension that is wracking Jahilia, and transforms it according to the dictates of desire through processes of displacement and condensation. In short, the Prophet's idea is like a dream. "The dream is part of our very essence," Rushdie has elsewhere written: "We first construct pictures of the world, and then we step inside the frames" ("In God We Trust")

377-78). "Given the gift of self-consciousness, we can dream versions of ourselves, new selves for old" (377). More recently he has said, "The creatures of our imagination crawl out from our heads, cross the frontier between dream and reality, between shadow and act, and become actual" (Step Across 375).

Mahound, who dreams that the angel Gibreel speaks the words he wants to hear, himself appears in the novel as a figure in the dreams of another Gibreel: Gibreel Farishta, a twentieth-century man, dreams he is the archangel visiting prophet figures past and present. Both men dream versions of themselves and their worlds: Mahound dreams of a heaven that sends him immutable messages with advice for coping with his immediate problems, and Gibreel, having lost his faith, dreams of a Prophet whose Revelation is but a clumsy projection of his desire. The Prophet seeks a message that is true once and for all and that will make his present the defining moment for all eternity; the modern skeptic dreams his own moment was no different from the past, because the rules governing change are fundamentally unchanging.

The struggle among rival ideas in The Satanic Verses—monotheism and paganism, religion and secularism, tradition and modernity, prophecy and satire—is not fought on the neutral ground of some Habermasian public sphere. Dreams do not all enter the world and then engage in rational debate with other dreams. The struggle among dreams is precisely for hegemony: the power to name the world and determine consensual reality. A dream that successfully enters the world shuts out other dreams, dooming them to remain mere dream. The Satanic Verses stages a contest between the twentieth-century prophetess Ayesha, leading her followers through the sea to Mecca, and Mirza Saeed, a secular man who resents the prophetess for stealing his wife from him. That contest has two conclusions: in the first, Ayesha and the faithful drown in the sea; in the second, Mirza Saeed is himself saved from drowning in the sea that engulfs the world when he makes a "different choice," opens his heart to receive Ayesha, and walks to Mecca across the bed of the Arabian Sea (507). Whichever dream makes itself true—and both, it seems, have the capacity to do so—dooms the other to unreality.

According to Philip Fisher, Emerson saw that change comes to the world of things as they are, to "the sedimentation of thousands of years of different imaginations," when someone draws a new circle that contains the circle of the world: "A new idea or invention surrounds and

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dissolves the earlier fixed places for these limited facts. This new circle makes a new world" (16). New World capitalism may be characterized by ever-expanding circles of innovation, as Fisher suggests, but in Rushdie's world, circles strenuously resist containment and try to contain the others. Gibreel seems to be dreaming Mahound, but it is Mahound who puts words in his mouth: it is "not possible to say which of us is dreaming the other" (110). Like someone in a Borges story, Gibreel wants to dream a man and "impose him upon reality" (Borges 97) but discovers with some bitterness that he is himself the dream creation of another: "To be not a man, but the projection of another man's dream—what incomparable humiliation, what vertigo!" (Borges 100).

In The Satanic Verses there is no way to judge between Gibreel's and Mahound's dreams based on their relative truth, since that would imply standing outside both. As Mishra points out, the "grounds of the arguments are incommensurable" (140). Mahound's dream of Gibreel empowers him, however, while Gibreel's dream of Mahound debilitates and destroys the dreamer. Mahound's dream is characterized by monoglossia, while Gibreel can become the conduit for anyone's message—but this capacity for polyphony is distinctly sinister. Gibreel swears, "if I was God I'd cut the imagination right out of people and then maybe poor bastards like me could get a good night's rest" (122). He is going mad—filled so completely with the ideas of others that he loses himself—and in the end shoots his lover and then himself.

If in *The Satanic Verses* certain ideas and dreams have the power to enter the world, this rephrases the question about imitation and newness: why is it that some words command belief and others not? Clearly, for newness to enter the world, it is not enough to dream. Simona Sawhney writes that Rushdie "consciously calls attention to the ambiguous status of dreaming, which can signify at once an idle fantasy and a profound vision" (264). Where Maimonides says the "dreams of men belong to God" and "when they are clear and distinct and one cannot see who spoke them, [they] are holy" (qtd. in Borges 160), Mernissi argues that orthodoxy considers that "Creation, imagination, individuality—so many facets of a fabulous, dangerous energy—are like mirrors and dreams" (95)—that is, mere mirrors and dreams. Rushdie's novel quotes the Quran's injunction against false idols: "These are but names you dreamed of, you and your fathers. Allah vests no authority in them" (124). But it also quotes Blake: "Then I asked: does a firm perswasion that a thing is so, make it so? He [Isaiah]

replied. All poets believe that it does" (338). Is the key to having an idea enter the world the conviction with which it is believed? Gibreel experiences Mahound's will as a "gravitational field . . . as powerful as a goddamn megastar" (122). But this is circular: strong ideas succeed because they are strong. Where does that strength come from?

For Rushdie, a new idea enters the world when incommensurate ideas meet. While writing *The Satanic Verses*, he suffered writer's block like his character Baal, and visited Nicaragua at the invitation of the Sandinista government. In *The Jaguar Smile*, his account of that visit, he presents the political crisis in Nicaragua as a contest of interpretations. There are two possible Nicaraguas, two understandings of the fearsome jaguar that Nicaragua may be riding: it may be the powerful United States—"the 'leftist' interpretation" (161)—or it may be the Sandinista revolution itself. Rushdie feels that he must choose between the two mutually exclusive frames: "Finally I . . . tore up the picture that looked, well, wrong, and threw it away" (161). The epistemological question becomes an existential choice: the truth about the Sandinistas appears less important than the possibility of defining himself by his choice of solidarity. But the existence of a choice of interpretative frames is what makes the existential leap of faith possible and so overcomes the writer's block.

The newness of Mahound's prophecy and Rushdie's satire involves for each inventing and wrestling with two opposing doubles. Mahound relies on the angel for his divine revelation but finds that this requires him to accord the devil just as much power. Rushdie, the secular novelist, invents Baal, a character like himself in spirit, yet this invention relies on a character as much unlike the novelist as possible: the prophet Mahound.

If newness comes in twos, we can see another such pair in the figure of the Imam, based on Khomeini, and the devil-creator. As Mernissi points out, "an imam always has an opponent" (23). Gibreel Farishta notes perplexedly that "All around him . . . are people hearing voices, being seduced by words. But not his; never his original material. —Then whose? Who is whispering in their ears, enabling them to move mountains, halt clocks, diagnose illnesses?" (234). At a climactic moment in *The Satanic Verses* "the spirits of the world of dreams flooded through the breach into the universe of the quotidian," affording Gibreel a vision of the Supreme Being himself, who looks of course like Rushdie: "He saw, sitting on the bed, a man of about the same age as himself, of medium height, fairly heavily built, with salt-and-pepper beard cropped close to the line of the

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jaw. What struck him most was that the apparition was balding, seemed to suffer from dandruff and wore glasses" (318). When the disembodied narrator asks at the beginning of the novel, "Who am I? Who else is there?" (4), he speaks not only as the devil denying God and claiming responsibility for a rival creation but also as the author asserting that none of the characters in his creation would exist without him.

In Rushdie's novel, as for the Prophet, an idea never enters the world alone but in mortal combat with another idea. It needs a devil as much as an angel, a blasphemer as much as a prophet. An idea becomes reality by robbing another idea of reality, but first, it requires that other idea. The Prophet divides the world into angelic and demonic forces; Gibreel divides the world into dreams and waking reality; the novel divides the world into prophecy and satire. Newness thus enters the world as rival frames violently oscillate in tandem. After the big bang of their entrance, the two ideas fall to earth, each held tight in the arms of the other whom it would repudiate, each willing an action and seeking to make the other do "what is willed" (Satanic 10). The division into inside and outside, idea and world, within the text opens a wormhole through which the new idea and its enemy can both escape the covers of the text and tumble into the world.

Rushdie's own new thing

I have been describing how *The Satanic Verses* represents newness entering the world. Has the novel in fact entered the world this way? Michael Fischer and Mehdi Abedi describe *The Satanic Verses* as a "highly charged social text that gets people to further enact the conflicts it describes" (108). Srinivas Aravamudan even suggests that

the anti-Muslim feeling generated through the Rushdie affair contributed significantly to the renewed demonization of Islam, which in turn helped create the ideological groundwork in the West for George [H.W.] Bush war against Iraq, an event that by conservative estimates led to the butchery of 100,000 Muslims. (329)

As has often been remarked, the novel's brothel scene predicts the fate of the novel itself. When Baal proposes to a prostitute that she take the name of Mahound's favorite wife, she exclaims, "If they heard you say that

they'd boil your balls in butter" (380). Though the Madam of the brothel feels "It is very dangerous," she also thinks "it could be damn good for business." The author of *The Satanic Verses* seems to have been unable to escape the fate he envisioned for Baal. He has been burned in effigy and made the subject of a hate film. He felt that the affair has given rise to a "false self" or "golem" that circulates beyond his control, "as if a shadow has become substance while I have been relegated to the shadows" ("In Good Faith" 405). Rushdie's new idea entered the world all right, but like Frankenstein's monster, it escaped the control of its maker.

Rushdie's fate also mirrors the one that he inflicts on his character Mahound when the poet Baal mimics the Prophet's domestic arrangements with a savage difference. The Prophet finds himself mired in the world up to his loins and sinking fast. Novelist and Prophet each feel shadowed by a horribly false self beyond his control. If entering the world always leaves one vulnerable to parody, I am arguing that that is because

parody of the other is precisely the way one enters the world.

In Rushdie's later novel Fury, a sort of allegory of the author's career, Malik Solanka invents a web-based hypertext story about a puppet maker whose puppets cut their strings and take on a life of their own. Within the confines of the novel, life then imitates art when, in Lilliput-Blefescu, revolutionaries mount a futile military coup wearing masks based on Solanka's characters. Solanka finds himself being literally held hostage by images of his own characters. "Such is the miraculous nature of the future of exiles," the Imam says in The Satanic Verses, that "what is first uttered in the impotence of an overheated apartment becomes the fate of nations" (209).

Faced with what his novel says is the first question asked of all new ideas—will you compromise?—Rushdie, like his creation Mahound, blinked. Shocking those who had rallied around him and the right of free speech, he embraced Islam on 24 December 1990 ("Why I Have Embraced Islam"). Francis Bennion, a prominent member of a support committee, declared the novelist "not worth defending" (qtd. in Ahsan and Kidwai 23). As Salman the Persian says in the novel, "There is no bitterness like that of a man who finds out he has been believing in a ghost" (368). Rushdie later retracted his concession, attributing it to a moment of weakness: the devil made him do it.

If the first question asked of a new idea is: will you compromise? few ideas ever have to face the second question: what do you do when you

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win? In the case of the major ideas that have convulsed the world since *The Satanic Verses* affair—fundamentalism and globalization, Jihad and McWorld—that second question cannot yet be asked. Nor, given those choices, is the triumph of either one something many of us would hope for. But there is a point to asking where these ideas come from and where they get their strength, and the power of *The Satanic Verses* is largely in helping us do just that.

Notes

- 1. Rushdie's earlier novel, *Midnight's Children*, borrowed directly from Rodinson a list of "other prophets" in Arabia at the time of Muhammad (*Midnight's* 296). Rushdie presumably first read Rodinson while studying the history of Islam at Cambridge. Asad (264n29) and Al-Raheb (330) have already pointed out the debt to Rodinson in *The Satanic Verses*.
- 2. K. K. Ruthven quotes Emerson quoting Walter Savage Landor describing Shakespeare as possessing a transformative power that rendered him "more original than his originals" (133).
- 3. Sadik Jalal al-'Azm has pointed out the debt to Genet (268).
- 4. In history the scribe's name was 'Abdallah ibn Sa'd.
- 5. The novel's comparison of the Prophet to the novelist himself, as someone with a new idea, has prompted important critics to argue that Rushdie's intention was to honor Islamic culture (Jussawalla) or the Prophet (Werbner), or that Rushdie was writing as a Muslim (Suleri). Dismissing such attempts to locate Rushdie in a Muslim tradition, Aamir Mufti responds: "It would be outright foolishness to confuse Rushdie's (extremely important) gestures of appropriation towards the traditions of unorthodox and syncretic Islam with immersion in them" (279).
- 6. In a somewhat different register, Slavoj Žižek writes:

insofar as the ego emerges in the process of imaginary identification with its mirror-double who is at the same time its rival and its potential paranoid persecutor, the frustration generated from the side of the mirror-double is constitutive of the ego. The logic of this reversal is strictly Hegelian: what first appears as an external hindrance frustrating the ego's striving for satisfaction is thereupon experienced as the ultimate support of its being. (98)

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Frost's critics often invoke Wordsworth, or romanticism in general, in order to contrast romantic "excess" with Frost's thoroughly modern disenchantment, almost invariably diluting the complexity of romantic lyric's engagement with the natural world. John Timmerman, for example, makes the claim—too obvious, in his estimation, to require proof—that in place of Enlightenment rationality "the Romantics simply substituted an equally abstract, divine, moral agency in nature" (35), and Robert Bernard Hass glosses the "romantic response to science" as "the intuitive worship of a transcendent being behind nature" (2). As Sheldon Liebman observes, "Frost's critics tend to define romanticism as metaphysically naive, morally irresponsible, and epistemologically regressive" (417). Yet the idea that romanticism imagines nature as a transparent order arrayed in accordance with human wishes is a gross distortion: the nature of Wordsworth and Shelley is dynamic, challenging, unmasterable. And while in some respects romanticism must, for Frost, be a diminished thing, some of its cherished hopes put by, yet Frost shares with his romantic forebears a vision of the natural world as the source and context of our lives.

For Frost as for Wordsworth, there is never any question of the world's not being there, or of discourse overwriting every surface. In both we find an awareness of all facts as figurally realized—of the mingling of is with seems—and also an insistence that imagination does not generate the world out of itself but responds to a nature that, encircling and transcending mind, engages us creatively. It is nature's uncontainability that permits us to find the fact in the relation, though never as a fixed, determined form. Relatedness is the fact of nature, not a fiction of the mind. "The mind fit[s] closely into the nature of the universe," Frost remarks (Selected Prose 60–61), echoing Wordsworth's declaration of

How exquisitely the individual Mind

(And the progressive powers perhaps no less
Of the whole species) to the external world
Is fitted; and how exquisitely too—
Theme this but little heard of among men—
The external world is fitted to the mind;
And the creation (by no lower name
Can it be called) which they with blended might
Accomplish: this is my great argument. (Major Works 198)

Like Wordsworth, Frost rejects the idea that nature is merely a linguistic construct. The words attest, at every turn, to the resistance of what cannot be inscribed or circumscribed. From this the poetry derives its formal integrity: it is, Frost says, "a figure of the will braving alien entanglements," encountering something other (Collected 787). The shape of the poem emerges from this encounter, this exchange. In Wordsworth's terms in "Tintern Abbey," the poem is born of "what we half create, / And what perceive" (Major Works 134); it records an act of communion that is also, for Frost, an act of sacrifice. That is why "the figure is the same as for love" (Collected 778)—not a figure of martial conquest but of compromise, of something strongly spent and something kept. Power abides only in the relation; Frost's, like Wordsworth's, is a "spousal verse" (Major Works 198).

The claim for Frost's antiromantic stance, meanwhile, is often staked on his supposedly antagonistic view of nature: nature as adversary, as a "destructive unintelligibility" opposed to an exclusively human "creative intelligence," as Frank Lentricchia puts it, whose ministrations wrest disorder into form (10). Frost himself occasionally appears to encourage this view: in his letter to *The Amherst Student* he famously—and with characteristic wryness—declares:

The background is hugeness and confusion shading away from where we stand into black and utter chaos; and against the background any small man-made figure of order and concentration. (Collected 740)

Yet the same letter, and even the tone of these lines, qualifies this somewhat Promethean image of humankind as adrift in a hostile wilderness.² The figure is patently hyperbolic and is followed by the teasing question: "What pleasanter than that this should be so?" "We don't worry about

this confusion," Frost continues, "because we like it, we were born to it, born used to it and have practical reasons for wanting it there." The night of "black and utter chaos" is a fortunate circumstance, for it lends coherence to our modest forms—"a basket, a letter, a garden, a room, an idea, a picture, a poem." We live, in Frost's tale, by asserting our little forms— Stevens might call them our ideas of order—and thus transforming the menacing background into a genial foil for our works. Like Wordsworth, Frost imagines the spaces of human dwelling as enfolded in a natural world that both sustains and threatens to undo them. Yet even the threat is no simple antagonism, but almost a kind of gift; there would be no hearthside comfort without the dark of the night. Domesticity shines out within the wild, and one is reminded of the special pleasure Wordsworth takes, in Home at Grasmere, in looking "through the blazing window" of a local cottage: "in the darkness of the night, then most / This Dwelling charms me" (Major Works 188). Our dwellings—poems as well as houses are both hardy and vulnerable, provisional coherences.

Even readers as astute as Lentricchia, so attentive to Frost's metaphoric play, take this dark pronouncement in The Amherst Student at face value. Poetry, Frost says, "is the pleasure of ulteriority"—the pleasure, that is, of metaphor, of "saying one thing and meaning another, saying one thing in terms of another" (Collected 786). "Unless you are at home in the metaphor," he cautions, "unless you have your proper poetical education in the metaphor, you are not safe anywhere" (721). Yet Lentricchia, like many of Frost's readers, treats a particular set of metaphors as objectively descriptive-perhaps because the idea of nature as "black and utter chaos" is so readily conformable to the prevailing metaphors of enlightened skepticism.3 This essentially materialistic view of nature propels us directly into the arms of a radical idealism, for once nature has been defined as unmeaning formlessness, form can only be impressed by the extrinsic ministrations of mind or spirit. Thus Hass argues that for Frost "creativity exists as a separate, autonomous activity in which matter serves as evidence and resource" (34), a tenet that reverses materialism's emphasis while leaving intact its disseverance of fact from value. The same logic constrains Lentricchia to read Frost's landscapes as psychic disclosures that, to adapt a remark David Perkins makes about Wordsworth, tell us little about the flowers—or brooks or fields or woods—but a great deal about the poet. Despite his contention that Kantian idealism is counterbalanced, in Frost, by a Jamesian "common sense realism" (3), Lentricchia's

own acquiescence in "the fashionable metaphor of the hour" (11)—nature own acquiescence in "the fashionable metaphor of the hour" (11)—nature as valueless, brute fact—keeps his readings dependent on an expressivist model that interprets Frost's nature as a chimera of his mind. Frost surely would have chafed against this: "There is no greater fallacy going," he wrote to Sidney Cox, "than that art is expression—an undertaking to tell all to the last scrapings of the brain pan. . . . My object is true form—is was and always will be—form true to any chance bit of true life" (Letters 361).

"The Most of It" interrogates the notion that nature is barren but for our self-projections. Unable to elicit from nature a responsive voice, the speaker concludes that an otherwise vacant nature contains only what Wordsworth calls the "emblems of his own unfruitful life" (Major Works

30):

He thought he kept the universe alone;
For all the voice in answer he could wake
Was but the mocking echo of his own
From some tree-hidden cliff across the lake. (Collected 307)

Frost's choice of form is peculiarly appropriate: the heroic quatrain comments wryly on the dubious heroism of a protagonist who thinks he keeps the spheres on course. This instantiation of the heroic quatrain is also, of course, an "echo" of every other, which by "mocking" or mimicking its predecessors also mocks itself: the poem's patent inscription within a poetic inheritance—formally, in its use of the heroic quatrain, and thematically, in its stereotyped romantic hero—exposes the absurdity of the presumption that any poem, or poet, keeps the universe alone. Yet it does so, initially, not by opposing community to solitude but by revealing the fraudulence of the supposedly unique original: the hero himself is but a mocking echo, "The Most of It" a poem of "copy speech." Indeed, we have here a rephrasing of the episode in Wordsworth's *Prelude* where the Boy of Winander

Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls,
That they might answer him; and they would shout
Across the watery vale, and shout again,
Responsive to his call, with quivering peals,
And long halloos and screams and echoes loud,
Redoubled and redoubled . . . (172)

By making his hero a mimic of a mimic, Frost asks us to consider that poetry may be no more than pantomime or parody. The poet-hero neither stands apart in noble isolation nor participates in a natural or artistic community: he takes his place in a line of inheritance that consists entirely of empty repetition—a redundant alienation from the source.

Solipsism here emerges as structurally identical to the poststructuralist notion of the text as that which speaks only itself. Both codify the impossibility of communication or communion, locking the self/text into an infinite rehearsal of its lacks. The variety and specificity of meanings collapse into a uniform nonidentity: the signifier always signifies a generalized absence that effaces the salience of the actual event—"some tree-hidden cliff," "Some morning"—as différance erodes real difference to abstract loss. Yet that the cliff from which the young man's voice rebounds is "tree-hidden" suggests that the transparency of call and echo (by which "we receive but what we give," as Coleridge puts it in "Dejection: An Ode") is false, that the hidden or occluded cannot be so readily equated with the nonexistent. Our hero, or text, or heroic text, attempts to present itself as comprehensive of the whole of life such that life's "wants"—not just what it lacks but what it desires—are coincident with our own:

He would cry out on life, that what it wants Is not its own love back in copy speech, But counter-love, original response. (Collected 307)

Life wants, he cries, not echoes, not redoublings, but rather a genuine exchange, a reciprocity in which what one receives is not one's own gift back again, repelled. The irony, of course, is that our hero wishes to dictate the form that "original response" should take; it should be receptive to his calls, should return them in his own tongue—should be "additional to him" (my emphasis). For what he desires is not communion but hegemony: he wants the dominion of his intelligence to extend to every corner of the earth, to illuminate all obscurities. The condition he cries out upon—his putative status as peerless universal keeper—is precisely what he seeks to confirm, and so the form his demand takes precludes its satisfaction. Anything that is not an echo risks being identified as "nothing." There seems to be no escape from the dejected circuitry whereby the sign-seeking call rebounds on its emptiness.

Unless—and here nature breaks in unceremoniously on the self-

reflective mind, the poem transgressing its stanzaic bounds and moving across three quatrains in one majestic sentence—

Unless it was the embodiment that crashed
In the cliff's talus on the other side,
And then in the far-distant water splashed,
But after a time allowed for it to swim,
Instead of proving human when it neared
And someone else additional to him,
As a great buck it powerfully appeared,
Pushing the crumpled water up ahead,
And landed pouring like a waterfall,
And stumbled through the rock with horny tread,
And forced the underbrush—and that was all. (Collected 307)

The moment recalls the "intruding sky" of Worthsworth's "Nutting" that rebukes the child; here too something other emphatically makes its presence felt. What is it that the buck embodies? "As a great buck it powerfully appeared": "it" may be the incarnation of some abstract meaning, spirit risked in substantiation like Shelley's "Power in the likeness of the Arve" (97). Yet if "it" gestures toward a meaning beyond itself, it is most striking in its massive, crashing and splashing corporeal presence. It does not prove human, nor does it prove that nature contains or complies with human intelligence; its appearance—in all its uninterpretable opacity is what forces the underbrush, making an impact, a gap like those that appear in the bounding wall each spring. Irreducible, knowable only in the encounter, the buck breaks into the ritual circle of the poem where imagination obsessively repeats its wants, not answering nor yet denying but bucking, or challenging, desire. By failing to be the hoped-for revelation—which would, in fact, be a repetition of the already known, a "someone else additional"—the buck puts us in contact with what is not additive but other, a difference not quantitative but qualitative, by no means an accretion of or adjunct to the human. The rough glory of this incomprehensible "embodiment"—the "all" of nature's body, of which nothing can be definitely predicated—rebuffs the speaker's, and the text's, claims to hegemony. In doing so, it opens the potential for a truly original response, a meaning that is not merely a rehearsal but a fresh upsurge of the world into the word.5

9

"There is at least so much good in the world," Frost writes, "that it admits of form and the making of form. And not only admits of it, but calls for it. We people are thrust forward out of the suggestiveness of form in the rolling clouds of nature" (Collected 740). The notion that the world calls for form, and that the forms we make are drawn from "the suggestiveness of form" in nature, blurs any stark distinction between natural chaos and man-made order. Poetry need not impose a meaning as from elsewhere but may disclose some potential, some heretofore unseen aspect of the earth's "true life." As "The Most of It" makes clear, the possibility of original response—on which poetry depends—is staked on nature's power to break through the established text and assert the reality of the not-yet-written. If poetry is to be, as Frost claims it is, "a fresh look and a fresh listen" (On Writing 80), then "before unapprehended relations," as Shelley put it (512), there must be "unmade words": "I want the unmade words to work with," Frost exclaims, "not the familiar made ones that everybody exclaims Poetry! at" (68).

Frost like Wordsworth understands our figures as part of nature's flesh. This is more than fancy or metaphysical speculation, for poetry is connected to the natural world through its rootedness in the human body. Frost's theory of "the sounds of sense" grounds meaning in physicality: these sounds "are always there—living in the cave of the mouth. They are real cave things: they were before words were" (Letters 191). His emphasis on sound as a mediating link between abstract significance and concrete sensory experience strongly resembles, and indeed provides a naturalistic explanation for, the comprehensive range of "sense" in Wordsworth's thinking: discursive "sense," far from being immaterial, is sensuousness refracted through the lens of the conceptual intelligence. Sound, says Frost, has a semantic content irreducible to discursive meaning: it is "an element of poetry, one but for which the imagination would become reason" (25). By emphasizing nondiscursive aspects of language, poetry draws us toward an understanding of the semantic value of the sensory, toward an experiential significance prior to interpretation. In poetry the sensuous texture of words is indivisible from their referential function; the poem thrives on this fundamental synergy of sensation and sense. "Sounds as well as thoughts have relations," Shelley writes in his Defence,

both between each other and towards that which they represent, and a perception of the order of those relations has always been found connected with a perception of the order and relations of thoughts. (14)

It is language's foundation in the physical, moreover, that makes communication possible, and the communion of mind with mind begins, for Frost, in our perception of our physiologic likeness:

We begin in infancy by establishing correspondence of eyes with eyes. We recognized that they were the same feature and we could do the same things with them. We went on to the visible motion of the lips—smile answered smile; then cautiously, by trial and error, to compare the invisible muscles of the mouth and throat. They were the same and could make the same sounds. We were still together. So far, so good. From here on the wonder grows. (On Writing 118–19)

These basic bodily affinities are the foundation and the prototype of the most elaborate metaphors we make, and in our recognition of them lies what Wordsworth calls "the first / Poetic spirit of our human life" (*Prelude* 80).

For Frost, the task of poetry is the reactivation of the connection between word and world, the transformation of the "grammatical sentence" into the "vital sentence" (On Writing 67), and it requires that we credit, however provisionally, our intuitive understanding. Conversely, if the poem does not give us the spirit of that sensuous experience which is the basis and reference of abstract thought, it gives us but a carapace, dead letters. "The living part of a poem," writes Frost, "is the intonation entangled somehow in the syntax idiom and meaning of a sentence. . . . It goes and the language becomes a dead language, the poetry dead poetry" (61). "Etherealizing," though hardly one of Frost's best poems, makes the point well enough. Were the theory "that flesh is something we can slough / So that the mind can be entirely freed" (Collected 358) to prove true, our liberated brains would have the great pleasure of lolling about on the beach as "once we lay as blobs of jellyfish / At evolution's opposite extreme":

But now as blobs of brain we'll lie and dream, With only one vestigial creature wish:

Oh, may the tide be soon enough at high
To keep our abstract verse from being dry. (359)

Dissevered from the sensuous, poetry loses its peculiar resonance and becomes a senseless repetition of old tropes, what Wordsworth reviles as "poetic diction." In *The Prelude* he writes of

that overprized
And dangerous craft of picking phrases out
From languages that want the living voice
To make of them a nature to the heart,
To tell us what is passion, what is truth,
What reason, what simplicity and sense. (192)

"There is something in the living sentence (in the shape of it) that is more important than any phrasing or chosen word," Frost writes (*Letters* 557). This "something" is the life; and Wordsworth's lines above make clear that the ethical force of poetry lies not in its discursive propositions but precisely in this living element, this organic sound of sense that addresses itself not to the abstract intelligence but to what he calls the heart.⁶

"Mending Wall" suggests that this vital connection between nature and poetry, the involvement of man-made meanings in the bodily workings of the world, is what permits us not to escape from but to "go behind" our father's sayings and the empty echoes of a false hegemony. The mysterious "Something" with which the poem begins recalls the unnamable "it" that "powerfully appears" in the shape of the buck; here too is a limit of discourse, of our Adamic compass of the earth, that may enable language's renewal. "Something there is that doesn't love a wall"—therefore "there is something in the living sentence." Frost's "something" does not have the apparent gravitas of the "something far more deeply interfused" that Wordsworth writes of in "Tintern Abbey," but it is "a something given," a leading from below if not above:

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it
And spills the upper boulders in the sun
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast. (Collected 39)

At first glance Wordsworth's "something" would seem contrary to Frost's, a force of cohesion and community, whereas Frost's is on the side of

chaos. Yet the "something" that materializes in Wordsworth's poem also makes itself felt only when our old enclosures falter, when hedgerows are "hardly hedgerows" and the wild announces itself within the demarcating bounds of culture. Coherence or interfusion, as Wordsworth imagines it, embraces overflow rather than staunching it, compromising enclosures emulaces in the "something" here topples the wall. Frost's imagination, like Wordsworth's, is stimulated by such transgressions. The motion here as at the start of "Tintern Abbey" is of thaw: the caught world slackening and swelling in a springtime of revival, what has been frozen surging forth into the open day. Even the stones seem full of fertile promise as the groundswell spills them in the sun. This, the first distinct image we are offered, is itself an image of offering, albeit a haphazard offering, in which the contingency of natural process seems almost sacramental. We pass from the abstract (though conversational) language of the first line to the obscurity of the second—which asks us to feel the subterranean stirring of something we cannot see—to the gleeful release into sunlight. air and motion, a modest geologic resurrection. Our sympathies are all with this mischievous "something," a natural extravagance that awakens and satisfies our own anarchic impulses. Yet it is not mere anarchy that is unleashed but a possibility for new forms of togetherness: the "gaps" made by the saboteur allow that "even two can pass abreast," as though an Edenic freedom were restored.

Frost famously defines poetry as "a momentary stay against confusion" (Collected 777), but in "Mending Wall" poetic spirit seems to be complicit with confusion, while the "stay," or wall, is at enmity with imagination. We might understand the wall as a petrified cultural form; like a bit of poetry that has become mere saying, it has lost its vital meaning, its power to articulate and energize relationships—the stay turned staid. It is a metaphor for what Shelley saw as those metaphors that have "become through time signs for portions or classes of thoughts instead of pictures of integral thoughts" (512):

There where it is we do not need the wall:
He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
My apple trees will never get across
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him. (Collected 39)

The walls of our fathers have outlived their ostensible purposes and now are kept up simply for their own sake, but the gaps are an opportunity

to speculate and dream, a festival moment. They dare us to be radical, to overturn all and start from scratch—to "pass through" to whatever may be on the other side of the established social order. By this light, the neighbor appears a dull reactionary; "like an old stone savage armed," he is committed to a crude, obsolete code. Failing to think for himself, he refuses to question the past: "He will not go behind his father's saying." We, meanwhile, are implicitly aligned with the forces of disorder—and further, and more quietly, of political upheaval, of unbounded utopian (we might say Shelleyan) hope.

This is, though, a poem of mending, not of overturning. Utopian community is one dream these gaps in the old order may afford, but Frost, unlike Shelley, chooses not to pursue this dream into the wilderness. "Every new poem of a poet is a revolution of the spirit: that is to say it is a freshening," he writes to Archibald MacLeish. "But it leads to nothing on the lower plane of politics" (On Writing 45). He is perhaps more faithless than Shelley, incapable of sustaining for more than a moment the hope of a life unfettered and unwalled. But he is also more faithful; like Wordsworth, for him the lives we already live, though flawed and compromised, are yet worth living. Frost receives the gaps as an invitation, not to finish the job and destroy the wall completely but to mend the existing forms of community. Two lovers will not pass abreast; rather, two men this year as every year will meet

to walk the line
And set the wall between us once again.
We keep the wall between us as we go. (Collected 39)

"Something" at work in nature makes the gaps, inscrutable in origin and purpose—"no one has seen them made or heard them made"—which, by disturbing our sedimented forms, reanimate imagination and occasion a labor at once conservative and renovative. This "something" is what the ancients called inspiration, in recognition that our creativity, like our lives, issues from a source we cannot fathom. Community, Frost intimates, can only be sustained through such disruptions. Our makings are local expressions of larger processes of formation and deformation, a point Frost delicately plays on in his use of the verb to make. "Something . . . makes gaps"; the poet has "made repair"; the neighbor insists "Good fences make good neighbors"; and as the two reset the rounder stones, they "have to use a spell to make them balance." All the valences of the verb are set in

motion—to create, to do, to compel—and all varieties of making are implicated in the cyclic life of the creative force that ruptures stasis, issues into vital metaphors, and petrifies over time into walls and aphorisms. "And then," as Shelley has it, "if no new poets should arise to create afresh the associations which have been thus disorganized, language will be dead to all the nobler purposes of human intercourse" (512).

New poems, living sentences, emerge from the gaps nature makes in our existing ideas of order. "Mending Wall" is a poem about poesis in its most comprehensive sense, for the making that is the poem itself is here connected not only to other human makings but also to nature's power to shape the form our dreaming is to take. Order and disorder, spell and saying, are subtly linked, implicated in a single activity. The poet's poesis is facilitated by the Heraclitean poesis of nature, to which it seems to bear analogy: just how far that analogy extends, and just how akin our makings are to those of nature, are questions the poem provokes by the gaps or incongruities it opens within the verb to make—we might say within the "make" of the poem itself. The kind of circulatory, frictive motion charted by the verb's nonlinear adventure through the poem refigures the participatory syntax of Wordsworth's "sense sublime," reprising the spirit if not the letter of the older poet's claims. If to mend the wall is to restore it and reinstate an old convention—as of course all poems in part must do-then the builder lets the structure's imperfections show, insists that the wall is indeed a mended wall, one that contains the memory of its undoing and reminds us that our existence is, as Amy Clampitt says so beautifully, "this / botched, cumbersome, much-mended, / not unsatisfactory thing" (274). Deprived of mastery, we are granted the freedom to revise.

"A Star in a Stoneboat" is another poem of wall building, and like "Mending Wall," it displays an ambivalence toward man-made forms. The animating event is an imagined Fall from celestial grace:

Never tell me that not one star of all
That slips from heaven at night and softly falls
Has been picked up with stones to build a wall. (Collected 162)

The tone here is oddly equivocal. Does this command issue from a conviction so unshakeable that the speaker refuses to be told something so

ludicrous, so incredible, as that not one single star has ever been used as a building stone? Or is this a plea that a cherished fiction not be dispelled? The opening line is rhetorically comparable to that of "Never Again Would Birds' Song Be the Same": "He would declare and could himself believe," and the question, here as in the later poem, is just how to negotiate between faith and reason, between actuality and possibility. Is this a matter of fact or vain belief? We sensible people are likely to conclude the latter, encouraged, perhaps, by the childlike triple rhyme to place ourselves in the domain of fairytale. Here then is a charming thought, a pleasant piece of fantasy—that piled among the ordinary stones are former denizens of heaven. The fall is a fortunate one, a kind of blessing, a promise of light hidden within what appears but "dark / And lifeless." Yet as Frost indulges his conjecture and unfolds as fact the story of the star "some laborer found . . . faded and stone-cold," its fate seems less than fair. Cast out, misrecognized, it is wrenched into a service far beneath its birthright:

> It went for building stone, and I, as though Commanded in a dream, forever go To right the wrong that this should have been so. (163)

What seemed a blessing is now understood as a wrong, a transgression against spiritual nobility; the star come to earth is a degraded and diminished thing, and the laborer knows just what to make of it—a wall. He lacks the imagination to see the star truly. And it is the poet's task to "forever go / To right the wrong," seeking obsessively for the hidden star in the hope that he might restore it to its place. The order of walls, then, is disorderly, the wall itself a breach. If, as Wordsworth has it, duty "dost preserve the stars from wrong" (Major Works 297), then duty runs counter here to the preservation of the walls upheld by our fathers' sayings. Duty in "A Star in a Stoneboat" demands that every foundation be questioned: "for what I search / I must go measuring stone walls, perch on perch."

As in "Mending Wall," Frost here registers nature's counterforce, its resistance to the will; when picked up by the laborer, the star's "weight suggested gold / And tugged it from his first too certain hold" (162). This "too certain hold," this presumption of mastery, is a mark of blindness: "He noticed in it nothing to remark." He, like the neighbor, "moves in darkness," capable of seeing only darkness, and his imagination is just as "faded and stone-cold" as the lost star:

He did not recognize in that smooth coal The one thing palpable besides the soul To penetrate the air in which we roll.

We readers, the initiate, know better; we are given the power to see into his failure. Yet these lines trouble our ability to judge, assured of our own finer knowledge—just as "Mending Wall" at last both prompts and checks our scorn for the dull neighbor. For Frost presents us with a riddle: what is the one thing palpable besides the soul? Is it light? And what, moreover, of soul's palpability? Is not the immaterial soul the least palpable of things, imperceptible to the senses? Yet these lines make the extraordinary assertion that spirit is substantial, perhaps the whole of substance, that it alone is what we touch and feel, "handling" and rough handling. The contradictoriness of a palpable transcendence, the impossibility of identifying the "one thing" besides the soul—these involve us in a tangle of unanswerable questions, an obscurity akin to that in which the builder labors. The poem thus wrests meaning from our own "too certain hold" and makes room for the extravagant flight of fancy that ensues:

He did not see how like a flying thing It brooded ant eggs, and had one large wing, One not so large for flying in a ring,

And a long Bird of Paradise's tail (Though these when not in use to fly and trail It drew back in its body like a snail)

In "The Constant Symbol" Frost writes:

There's an indulgent smile I get for the recklessness of the unnecessary commitment I made when I came to the first line in the second stanza of a poem in this book called "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening." I was riding too high to care what trouble I incurred. And it was all right so long as I didn't suffer deflection. (Collected 788)

The line in question is "My little horse must think it queer," and the indulgent smile, no doubt, is at the preposterousness of attributing thought to a horse. The lines quoted above are similarly reckless, indeed completely off the wall; a thinking horse looks fairly unremarkable beside an ant-egg

brooding star with a bird's tail and lopsided wings. One is reminded of another marvelous poetic creature,

a gordian shape of dazzling hue, Vermillion-spotted, golden, green, and blue; Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard, Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson barr'd; And full of silver moons (Keats 343)

This is Keats's description of Lamia, that beautiful serpentine figure of wild imagination who withers at last beneath the skeptic Apollonius's gaze. Like Lamia, the star is a figure of figuration, a kind of pure creative potency. Both Frost and Keats suggest, by the very lavishness of their descriptions, that no one figure is adequate to its expression. In order to see the star at all, rather than just a "dark and lifeless" rock, we must see what it is like—that is, we must see metaphorically, actively. And there again is that curious word *thing:* the "one thing palpable besides the soul" is "like a flying thing." That irreducible thingness is accessible only through the act of likening; and what is its palpability if not the activity by which it is realized? The star is a process, a way of happening.

The passage is an unbridled celebration of imagination's power to bring forth an efflorescence invisible to the naked eye. The laborer "did not see" the wonders we cannot help but see; Frost conjures them before us, makes them palpable in all of their comic cosmic splendor. Yet the poem does not choose figure over fact, spirit over matter; to do so would be to repeat the laborer's error, his assumption that these are indeed separate worlds, that matter is mere matter, dark and lifeless, useless until put to use. Simon Jarvis's take on Wordsworth's humanism is equally applicable to Frost: "a humanism, not of the empire of spirit over matter, nor of the self-sufficiency of spirit, but of the necessary dependence of what we cannot but call spirit on something non-identical with itself" ("Wordsworth and Idolatry" 19).8 For Frost, the star abides within the stone, the figure within the fact; walls contain but do not extinguish a native power of generation, a power that, come springtime, will "spill the upper boulders in the sun." We misrecognize both nature and ourselves so long as we refuse to go behind our father's sayings, behind the already said and done. Mere matter is dead metaphor, and we are deadened by it; but Frost implies that every bit of rock contains within a slumbering potential—and does not science confirm as much?

It yet has poles, and only needs a spin To show its worldly nature and begin

To chafe and shuffle in my calloused palm And run off in strange tangents with my arm, As fish do with the line in first alarm. (Collected 164)

The true nature of the thing makes itself known by its pull, its friction. If we are to protect the stars from wrong, we must let them run off with us; justice requires a measure of recklessness.

Too certain in his certainty, too narrow in his truths, the laborer does not realize that though we may with some success bend nature to our purposes, its energies run counter to, or overflow, our pragmatism. Though he "move it from the spot," the star has wrought upon that ground, sown seed at odds with practical utility:

The harm was done: from having been star-shot The very nature of the soil was hot

And burning to yield flowers instead of grain,
Flowers fanned and not put out by all the rain
Poured on them by his prayers prayed in vain. (Collected 163)

From where we stand, the star-shot soil seems a consecrated patch spared to serve the glory of the gods—to bloom in spectacular uselessness, a small Elysian field granted to earth. For the farmer it is another matter, this beauty but a blight; flowers go neither for sale nor sustenance. There is a terrible knowledge in these lines, somehow all the more serious for their play. For the sacred seems to demand a loss, an unintelligible sacrifice; the extravagance that animates and graces life also endangers it. The farmer, with belly and bankbook in mind, raises his prayer against what might seem most worthy of his worship. Here is the crux of the new historicist quarrel with romanticism's love of nature, for how can we celebrate what is also and inevitably destructive, pursuing what Wordsworth calls its "calm oblivious tendencies" (Major Works 43) until a cottage, as in Frost's "Directive," is "only a belilaced cellar hole, / Now closing slowly like a dent in dough" (Collected 342)? From this perspective both nature and Poetry appear, as Alan Liu suggests, a kind of parasitism. 9 Yet the "harm"

that brings forth flowers instead of grain provides, Frost intimates, a form of sustenance no less essential to our survival. Without the gaps that nature makes in our plans, there is no loss; but neither is there love.

9

Many of Frost's readers have understood the natural world, in his poetry, as a place of terror; and so it is. But it is also a place of wonderment and pleasure; the imagination, as in *The Prelude*, is "fostered alike by beauty and by fear" (*Prelude* 306), and often by the two at once—both because beauty may come to harm and because beauty itself may be a kind of harm. Nature reminds us that we are compromised, bears witness to our being not unbounded, as Frost puts it in "Beech." Yet it is precisely our failure to encompass nature whole that leaves room for grace. So often in Frost, it is not our labor that redeems nature but rather nature that redeems labor by escaping from the "general mowing" of human purpose: the tuft of flowers left "to flourish, not for us . . . But from sheer morning gladness at the brim" (*Collected* 31) occasions an affirmation of community; the enchanted grove of "Rose Pogonias" prompts a prayer

That in the general mowing
That place might be forgot;
Or if not all so favored,
Obtain such grace of hours
That none should mow the grass there
While so confused with flowers. (23)

This wish is reiterated more than 20 years later in "Unharvested":

May something go always unharvested!

May much stay out of our stated plan,

Apples or something forgotten and left,

So smelling their sweetness would be no theft. (Collected 277)

Our "stated plan" delimits and defines what is properly ours; the evasiveness of nature, meanwhile, affords an opportunity to recollect a common earthly heritage. Nature's violations of human law are moments when community is reaffirmed: for it is not the wall that makes good neighbors but the communal labor of rebuilding it.

The work of mending is, Frost says, "just another sort of outdoor

game"; and here we hit a crucial point. For if nature's wily uncontainability continually enjoins labor, it also conjoins labor with play, vocation with avocation. In figuring and refiguring we participate in a dynamism that carries us beyond our stated plans, beyond the already said, beyond the starkly utilitarian. The poem responds to the possibilities of nature with the same intuitive joy as the boy of "Birches," setting itself to play on the given. Pleasure is derived from difficulty and comes only of being bound, as by the laws of gravity. There must be the friction of the thing, tactility, the heft and sway. By virtue of being not unbounded, we are granted the occasional boundless moment, delicately poised in the hesitancy, the pause where truth mingles freely with belief.

He halted in the wind, and—what was that Far in the maples, pale, but not a ghost? He stood there bringing March against his thought, And yet too ready to believe the most.

'Oh, that's the Paradise-in-bloom,' I said; And truly it was fair enough for flowers Had we but in us to assume in March Such white luxuriance of May for ours.

We stood a moment so in a strange world, Myself as one his own pretense deceives; And then I said the truth (and we moved on). A young beech clinging to its last year's leaves. (215–16)

As is frequently the case in Frost, "A Boundless Moment" is both an anecdote about an excursion and the excursive happening itself. Metaphor blooms in this extravagance, this extra moment taken out of time. Frost, however, wants no "dream of the gift of idle hours, / Or easy gold at the hand of fay or elf" (26); there are limits to what one can or should believe, and, for better or for worse, we do not have it in us to assume such luxuriance for ours. For Frost as for Stevens, the poetical figure loses its force when it abandons itself to mere fancy; as Stevens puts it, the imagination "has the strength of reality or none at all" (7). It is from the pressure of restraint that the poem's true enchantment issues, as the bloom of Paradise is dispelled to show an earthly world still glisteningly strange: "A young beech clinging to its last year's leaves." The truth remains a figure—a

figure, moreover, specifically charged with human pathos, "ours" in a way that Paradise-in-bloom cannot be. Something is lost, but something strongly kept; the beech clings tenaciously, improbably, to leaves that winter should have taken long ago. In its brief dalliance with "the most," the poem discovers what suffices, the spare but sweet luxuriance of March. "Anything more than the truth would have seemed too weak" (Collected 26); 11 the truth itself is more than might have been expected, and quietly bears the mystery of heaven.

The idea that the figure, although bound, is its own sufficiency or form of fullness turns up again and again in Frost. Otherwise, "the world might just as well be Heaven at once and have it over with" (*Collected* 739). The earth ignites our dreaming and shapes the forms our dreaming is to take. We send up the sparks of imagination in hopes

a few might tangle, as they did,
Among bare maple boughs, and in the rare
Hill atmosphere not cease to glow,
And so be added to the moon up there. (216)

Here again the celebration of a moderate excess, a light additional to the light that's given, raised, on a careful whim, by human hands. The bareness of the boughs, perhaps, invites this impulse to ornament, however briefly, their stark lines. And again, the sense of a mild conspiracy between the given and the made; that the bareness of the boughs is good, because it looses this small fantasy; that the rareness of the atmosphere likewise facilitates. "The sparks made no attempt to be the moon"; more or less earthbound, they "figure in the trees" as the constellations that outlast them. Value issues from and returns to the earth which solicits our playfulness, our creativity. All of our figures are provisional; they do not exhaust nature's creative potential, the source of every aesthetic act. Yet their lingering, their extra moment of existence, is their bit of grace. And it is that moment, that extra, that minor confounding of time, in which they "figure," in which their being exceeds itself. 12

"Never Again Would Bird Song Be the Same" again raises the possibility that our meanings may gently intermingle with nature rather than usurp it. As has often been noted, the poem reads like an addendum, or feminized counterpoint, to "The Most of It." If "The Most of It" imagines nature's speech as inscrutably counter to our own, a manifestation whose significance lies hidden in folds of flesh and rock—richly suggestive, yet

illegible—the poem that immediately follows in A Witness Tree conceives of a commingling of human and nonhuman song. Recall that "Nutting" closes with an exhortation to a "dearest maiden" to

move along these shades
In gentleness of heart; with gentle hand
Touch—for there is a spirit in the woods.
(Major Works 154)

Wordsworth leaves blank the transitional space between the recognition of nature's otherness and the final reaffirmation of kinship; "Never Again" provides one possible answer to the question of how we may negotiate this transition—how the recognition of nature's resistance to human desires, and of ourselves as trespassers, may lead not to irony and further violence but to gentling. While nature may not conform to our abstractions, "Never Again" suggests that language, and therefore human meaning, coincides with nature through the sounds of sense. Eve's "tone of meaning but without the words" is the resonant tissue that binds speech to nature:

He would declare and could himself believe
That the birds there in all the garden round
From having heard the daylong voice of Eve
Had added to their own an oversound,
Her tone of meaning but without the words. (Collected 308)

Eve's influence, however slight or intermittent, makes its mark. Like the sparks "content to figure in the trees," her voice demands no radical transformation but figures in and with the forms of nature. While the young man of "The Most of It" cries out for "someone else additional," "Never Again" finds satisfaction in the possibility that human song might add to, not remake, the universe, that the forms of our making, ourselves, might linger just long enough to be added to the moon. Human purpose, as here conceived, is not to master or subdue the earth, but to make just such a difference in its song.

The hypothesis that Eve's voice has changed the song of the garden birds is, of course, absurd; Frost goes out of his way to make it so. Even supposing an acceptance of biblical as actual history—already, for most readers, a bit of a stretch—how could "the birds there," these birds in the yard, have heard the voice of Eve at the dawn of creation? A flagrant

departure from the factual, the poem gleefully flouts the boundaries between past and present as between truth and fable, proposing an alternate version of truth and temporality. Clearly this does not pass muster as natural history or as scientific theory. It is a spell to re-enchant the earth: what it requires is not belief but the possibility of belief, an openness in which "the garden round" might, for a moment, recover the gifts of Eden. If the Fall expels humankind into the agony of history and a hostile wilderness in which our calls find no reply—or answers so cryptic as to be indecipherable—here the suspension of disbelief grants a provisional reprieve, a modest renewal of orphic potentials. What, after all, Frost asks, could one believe? He calls on our generosity as readers, our willingness to ride with him on a thought that cannot, at last, be verified. What the poem argues, in not arguing what it purports to argue, is that there are modes of understanding and engagement other than those prescribed by what is generally recognized as common sense. If "The Most of It" is a poem of adolescent Sturm und Drang, "Never Again" suggests that maturation entails a tempering of both skepticism and idealism, a playful willingness to hazard belief. Such impractical, incredible imaginative play may grant us a knowledge, otherwise inaccessible, of the human mind as at home in the nature it perceives and half-creates.

Yet Frost is acutely aware that such knowledge, however deeply felt, may always be dismissed as vain belief, the most of it as mere appearance, truth but a pebble of quartz. "Correspondence is all" (Collected 742), he writes in his introduction to King Jasper, but correspondence is not a static universal. It admits difference and distance, and therefore affinity is never guaranteed: "Mind must convince mind that it can uncurl and wave the same filaments of subtlety, soul convince soul that it can give off the same shimmers of eternity" (my emphasis). "At no point would anyone but a brute fool want to break off this correspondence"—but nevertheless, it may be broken or at least denied. The bonds of kinship, between self and other as between word and world, are vulnerable, and likeness can always be interpreted as unlikeness. The strength of these bonds, Frost suggests, is rooted in the body's participation in a nature enduringly opaque to understanding; yet for just this reason we are incited to rebel against it, to deny what calculation cannot fully penetrate. Is this not why Ivan Karamazov gives his ticket back? Why the mariner shoots the albatross? Why the boy of "Nutting" so violently defiles the quiet hazel grove? The moments of redemption and communion that reconnect us with the

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earth and one another are, like Lamia, as fragile as they are potent. Illumination, as Liebman notes, requires darkness (432); and the clarification, once granted, "cannot be verified" and "cannot be communicated, unless, perhaps, the reader shares some common ground of experience with the poet" (427).

Truth, for Frost, requires the recognition of limitation, of the contingency of knowledge—knowledge precarious but not invalid. A momentary but sufficient stay, the orders that a poem "written regular" brings to the page are a convergence of craft with discovery, choice with chance, and their strength is in that union. The world comes forward to shine in the word, to be, for a moment, housed in it. This is the constant symbol of the poem, drawn from and partly shrouded in obscurity, as

truth's established and borne out,
Though circumstanced with dark and doubt (Collected 301)

Although the poems occasionally end with what appear to be moral axioms ("We love the things we love for what they are" [116]; "Men work together ... whether they work together or apart" [32]), their conclusiveness is always subtended or undercut. Such incongruous patness points us toward the "doubt and dark" with which our sayings are always circumstanced. The poem is the moment in which the cup is offered, the moment before we get beyond confusion. In the clarity of suspension, we see both confusion's resumption and its end. Revelation, though not just momentary, is nonetheless never an assured possession. The poetclimber goes not to but "Toward heaven, till the tree could bear no more, / But dipped its top and set me down again" (118). Jacob's ladder runs both ways, as Frost well knew. And knowledge emerges less as a spiritual ascent beyond confusion than as the realization of the equivocal itself as the condition of blessing, the space of relatedness and compromise "in which, in the end / We find our happiness, or not at all" (Prelude 398). In other words, earth's the right place for love.

Notes

1. There is much that I find sympathetic in Lentricchia's argument, which stresses the copresence in Frost of a post-Kantian notion of mind as constitutive of its environment and a "philosophy of common sense realism" (3) that affirms the mind's presence in a world not of its making. Yet although Lentric-

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chia sees Frost as rejecting idealism, his readings nonetheless remain entrenched in a dualism that divides "brute fact" from the poet's creative imagination and tends to imply that all value is bestowed by the willful individual. One index of Lentricchia's bias is his designation of recurrent features of landscape in Frost's poetry—the trees, brooks, and so on—as "obsessive images," as though the salience of nature were due to some peculiarity of Frost's psyche rather than to the enduring presence of these natural forms as enfolded in the patterns of daily life.

- 2. Sheldon Liebman notes that Frost "often contradicted his own antiromantic statements. After saying in 'On Emerson' that 'a melancholy dualism is the only soundness,' Frost adds, 'The question is: is soundness of the essence'"; and "having defined romanticism as a futile yearning for the ideal, he said, 'Many of the world's greatest—maybe all of them—have been ranged on that romantic side'" (418).
- 3. Lentricchia quotes Frost's remark that "We are all toadies to the fashionable metaphor of the hour" and goes on to observe that

in Frost's view, as in Nietzsche's and Hans Vaihinger's before him, the metaphoric integrations of powerful thinkers become (for ordinary men) the structures—the "world hypotheses" as Stephen Pepper put it—which condition and frame our understanding of human experience. (11)

Yet Lentricchia himself treats a certain set of metaphors as though they were objectively descriptive. Consider his reading of "The Generations of Men," which closes with the following remark: "The brook spurs the visionary spirit in its search for integration, even though it remains, in empirical reality, a 'faded paper sheet / Of dead leaves stuck together'" (53). That Lentricchia takes this particular and markedly figural figure as empirically true is indicative of his assumption that nature, as Ruskin puts it, "is dead enough in itself" (79).

- 4. Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," Perkins contends, "hardly looks at the flowers, though it tells a great deal about the poet" (80).
- 5. Heather Cass White, who also links "The Boy of Winander," to "The Most of It," suggests that Frost's poem unmasks the violence of the Wordsworthian visionary but remains trapped within its distinctly male rendition of vocation. This "masculine crowing" (123) is a concept of poetic calling that is also an intrusive and fruitless way of calling on nature. My own reading sees the buck, like the "intruding sky" of "Nutting," as an actual break in the cycle of self-projection, one that makes room for, if it does not yet realize, a more attentive and equivocal poetics.

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6. Frost's "sounds of sense" are close to what Merleau-Ponty calls the "gestural sense" of the word:

If we consider only the conceptual and delimiting meaning of words, it is true that the verbal form—with the exception of endings—appears arbitrary. But it would no longer appear so if we took into account the emotional content of the word . . . its "gestural" sense, which is all-important in poetry, for example. It would then be found that the words, vowels and phonemes are so many ways of "singing" the world, and that their function is to represent things not, as the naive onomatopoeic theory had it, by reason of an objective resemblance, but because they extract, and literally express, their emotional essence. (217)

7. Bonnie Costello argues:

the erosion of boundary does not, for Frost, suggest Romantic continuity—the unity of man and nature under a metaphysical light. The modern principle of discontinuity rather than holism is alive precisely in the word "gaps." (20)

Yet Costello's insistent opposition of "Wordsworthian completion" (21) to Frost's "unromantic, fragmentary landscapes" elides Wordsworth's own sensitivity to flux, to the disjunctive and asymmetrical unfoldings of natural process. (What are the stunned reiterations that open "Tintern Abbey" if not a confrontation with a gap between time present and time past, a gap that at once imperils old ideas of order and grants Wordsworth the freedom of motion required to make amends?) For all of its fineness, Costello's reading overstresses the difference between romantic and modern modes of repair and thus loses sight of what Wordsworth and Frost hold so strongly in common: a vision of nature not as the metaphysical ground of humanity's redemption but as the physical ground of its powers of reinvention. See Costello 20–21.

8. See also Jarvis's "Wordsworth's Gifts of Feeling" for an excellent discussion of how an ontology of dejection generates a correspondent economy.

9. "If poetry is rich," writes Liu,

then its value arises like the Phoenix in Donne's poem. It springs up either in immaculate remove from the realities devaluing culture ... or, even more inhuman, perhaps precisely in concealment of the fact that poetic richness is "urned" by preying upon cultural value. (322)

10. One is reminded of another prayer raised by another poet for whom nature was continual inspiration—who seemed, indeed, to draw the sap of his strength directly, viscerally from the earth. These lines are from Hopkins's "Inversnaid":

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What would the world be, once bereft
Of wet and of wildness? Let them be left,
O let them be left, wildness and wet;
Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet. (89)

- 11. Compare Stevens: "He must say nothing of the fruit that is / Not true, nor think it, less" (82).
- 12. Elisa New's remarks about "Rose Pogonias" are resonant here. Frost, she says, "modifies the Emersonian dream of deathlessness or indeterminacy ... for a more chastened hope: a simple surcease of destruction. Time enough for a poem" (296).

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A Turning Point in Native American Fiction?

Native American Fiction: A User's Manual

by David Treuer St. Paul: Greywolf Press, 2006. 212 pages

Karl Kroeber

David Treuer's Native American Fiction: A User's Manual is an important contribution to the criticism of Native American literatures. The subtitle however, is misleading, for his book is a polemic. He concentrates on five texts published between 1976 and 1995, displaying no interest in the 160-year history of Native American fiction. He condemns criticism of modern Native American fiction because it praises these novels for their "authenticity"—the accuracy with which they represent the authors' traditional cultures—and contends that critics should evaluate them according to the same aesthetic standards by which all other fiction is judged. He argues cogently that modern Native American fiction does not and cannot represent practices of traditional cultures accurately. He judges Silko's Ceremony, Welch's Fools Crow, and Erdrich's Love Medicine to be "great" but insists that they deserve respect for their artistic excellence, not for the supposedly authentic embodiment of their authors' traditional cultures. They offer limited insight into those cultures, he charges, and they falsify traditional practices, particularly in storytelling.

Treuer's fundamental judgment is correct, although it is not, as he appears to believe, entirely original. But he does Native American literature good service in suggesting that all critics, especially native ones, obscure the genuine innovativeness and artistic skills of the best Native American novels by mistakenly praising their representations of "authentic" ancient lifeways. Treuer is himself the author of three novels, and is therefore asking that his own work be judged not on the grounds of any supposed recovery of traditional Ojibwe culture but on how his writing meets the

standards of excellence regularly applied to all fiction.1

I take this book as evidence that both contemporary Native American

fiction and criticism of it are maturing. However, there is much that is unsatisfactory in Treuer's presentation. His jumpy introductory sketch of the place of "Indians" in American literature draws on without crediting D. H. Lawrence's observation that the "Indian" haunts American literature. He blurs the troubling ubiquity of "Indians" dead or displaced in the work of virtually every major American novelist (and many minor ones), including Melville, Twain, Hemingway, Faulkner, by rehearsing criticism of an ancient critical chestnut of an awful translation. This is Schoolcraft's notorious nineteenth-century version of the Ojibwe "Chant of the Firefly," which in the mid-twentieth century the linguist Dell Hymes improved in a version that is still far from accurate. Nobody has praised Hymes's translation, but it is recognized as one of his early pioneering efforts to draw attention to unusual features of artistic form in Native American songs and stories. These efforts produced valuable practical results, such as getting traditional Native American fiction and song included for the first time (in the late 1970s and early 1980s) in popular teaching anthologies of American literature and the two volumes of American poetry published by the Library of America. Hymes also inspired significant linguistic analyses of Native American recorded oral texts and live performances that have led to some excellent practical criticism as well as igniting debates that have helped to give Native American literatures a place in international discussions of critical theory.

Treuer is better on specific texts, although he never relates the single novels by Erdrich, Welch, and Silko on which he concentrates to the authors' other works, and he ignores the relation of each to immediately preceding developments in Native American fiction. Erdrich's Love Medicine, for example, owes something to the earlier writing of both Welch and Silko (not to mention that of Michael Dorris). Such indebtedness is not a fault but rather calls attention to Erdrich's unusually restless literary sensitivity, exemplified by her later "rewriting" of Love Medicine. Nevertheless Treuer demonstrates effectively that Erdrich's novel "treats Native subjects with strikingly modern, or better, strikingly un-indian techniques." (39) These he identifies with a figurative and symbolic style closer to Mallarmé than Ojibwe literature, and he shows that Erdrich's claim that her method is an Ojibwe narrative device is groundless, while her sporadic uses of Ojibwe language are inept and inaccurate. He argues persuasively that Love Medicine is ineffective at recreating or representing traditional Ojibwe culture (for which it has been praised) but is a fine Karl Kroeber

modern, unindian artistic expression of longing for traditional Ojibwe culture.

Treuer makes the same argument in his analyses of Ceremony and Fools Crow: they tell us little about traditional Pueblo or Blackfoot cultures (Silko's native "medicine man," he points out [137], is a barely disguised Freudian analyst), but they strongly evoke nostalgia for these vanished lifeways.

Earlier, Treuer lists characteristic features of traditional Native American storytelling that never appear in the modern novels. I give his list here because it is so nearly identical with the list that I've hammered into students in my courses on Native American traditional literatures.²

In traditional Native American stories, Treuer observes,

The first person is never used. There is no metaphor, simile, metonym, or implied comparison. There is no "subjectivity" or "competing versions." The stories exist outside of time. . . . It could have happened yesterday or three hundred years ago. The narratives exist in indefinite relation to other stories; it does not matter which story is told first or which story occurs first in time. There is never a moment when the story shifts register. (54–55)

The agreement of my list with Treuer's supports his claims because we are, so to speak, working in opposite directions. My non-native students can't appreciate the artistry of traditional "Indian" stories until they understand their style, because that is so utterly unlike Western print storytelling. Treuer shows that the style of modern novels by Native American authors is utterly different from the oral storytelling practiced in native cultures. And of course the stylistic characteristics we cite are linked to equivalent differences in characterization, articulation of motives, and plot structure. "Indian" storytellers, for example, dispense with suspense.

Treuer's critique is perhaps most cogent in his analysis of Ceremony, where he shows that "Tayo's (the protagonist's) moral and sociopolitical predicaments mirror those of Luke Skywalker" (144). (Ceremony and Star Wars both appeared in 1977.) The "myth" in both of these entirely modern narratives has no real relation to myth in any traditional culture but "functions as a kind of cultural nostalgia" (151). Fools Crow poses some problems for Treuer's approach, but that makes his commentary especially interesting. Treuer observes that Welch's dialogue and manner of present-

ing his characters has affinities with Homer's stylized formality in The Odyssey, endowing his characters with gravitas and their utterances with thetorical dignity. This is helpful in focusing attention on the unusual quality of the language of Fools Crow, but it is only an analogy. Homer's quality of a centuries long tradition of poetic recitation. Welch's oral literary tradition had been obliterated by the events dramatized in his novel. In his eagerness to deny cultural authenticity to all Native American novelists, Treuer here obscures what most distinguishes Welch from Silko and Erdrich, the depth of his historical research into his people's history and his undertaking to write a traditional historical novel more in the line of Scott, Hugo, and Tolstoy than Cooper. No other Native American author has used this most popular of nineteenth-century literary forms of the European destroyers of his people to dramatize that destruction.3 Welch innovates on that novelistic tradition, however, when in his conclusion he incorporates traditional Blackfoot mythology directly into the naturalism of his historical fiction, a point slighted by Treuer.

The value of Treuer's basic argument is diminished by his omission of any reference to Gerald Vizenor, one of the most prolific, inventive, and important of the first-generation novelists of the Native American Renaissance. Vizenor's fiction never claims traditional authenticity and is marked by a dramatically unindian, postmodern style. The omission is glaring because Vizenor has for several years been articulating the essential feature of Treuer's position through his campaign on the need for postindians. Vizenor argues that the misnomer Indian, the most common term applied to Native Americans, in fact defines them as unreal, simulations belonging to nonexistent (because destroyed) cultures. Indian is white culture's verbal means for completing its physical genocide of Native North American peoples. Natives should reject the term Indian, which identifies them as ghosts (who can only haunt), and insist on their very real existence as postindians who, because now independent of both Western and traditional cultures, are able to offer truly postmodern alternatives to contemporary white culture—unless they become too busy exploiting their exploiters with casino gambling.

Vizenor is a theoretically sophisticated critic. He was the first to point out to white ethnographers and folklorists that the Native American trickster is a figure of speech, not a character. This is why trickster stories are never told in the first person. In his novels, unlike those of most of the Native writers of his generation, he has favored comic rather than tragic

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modes. Treuer could have added both historical depth and intellectual weight to his book by recognizing Vizenor's precedence.

Attention to Vizenor might also have helped Treuer in dealing with the difficult issue of fake indian literature, a topic unavoidable for him because he insists that Welch, Silko, and Erdrich produce excellent art precisely because their "recoveries" of tradition are inauthentic. Treuer's exemplary fake is Asa Carter's The Education of Little Tree, which he uses for an extended comparison/contrast with Sherman Alexie's Reservation Blues. Here personal animus weakens Treuer's criticism. Alexie, the best known and most significant Native American writer of the post-Welch-Silko-Erdrich-Vizenor generation, is by no means above criticism. The unevenness of his vital talent and the confused grandiosity of his ambitions produce a mixture of very good writing and very bad-a bit analogous to the young John Keats. Treuer does not distinguish either well or graciously between these extremes. Thus he savages equally two of Alexie's metaphors, "his words sounded like stones in his mouth and coals in his stomach" and "She saw the Indian horses shot and fallen like tattered sheets" (170-71). Treuer is right that the latter is dreadfully overstrained, but he misses the former's imaginative potency.

Treuer's critique is also out of date now because his book appeared before Alexie's most recent novel, *Flight*, which represents a real and welcome maturing of his art. I therefore offer a view different from Treuer's speculation on fake indians, observing only that I disagree with Treuer's implication that Asa Carter and Sherman Alexie differ because of the latter's superior skill as a writer. Yes, but one is a liar and the other is doing his damndest to tell the truth—which a novelist as good as Treuer must know is one hell of job.

My speculation on fake indians starts from the familiar observation that only "Indians" are so plagued—fake Asian Americans and fake Latinos are much fewer and farther between. To me, the difference in quality and quantity makes familiar explanations of the appeal of romanticism and noble savagery inadequate. The single thing that all 577 Native North American tribal states agreed on was that their particular way of life was better than the European way. Although outgunned, soon outnumbered, and technologically disadvantaged, North American "Indians" fought against the white invasion from the Atlantic to the Pacific, winning a few battles but losing every war, yet never changing their antipathy to the Western way of life. Ishi's Yahi, when they couldn't fight any longer, went

into hiding for 40 years—anything to live their way, not ours.

Their way was quite diverse—577 distinct cultures—although the total population at first contact was probably not much more than 20 million in a lot of space. Some "Indians" were sophisticated agriculturists, some developed complex irrigation systems, and many tribal groups relied significantly on agriculture, but there were no cattle, horses, pigs, or sheep. Many "Indians" were entirely hunter–gatherers, and hunting and gathering were a part, usually a major part, of every native North American culture. Given the richness of the flora and fauna of North America, the "Indians" would have been fools not to hunt and gather. They did enjoy a few European introductions, notably matches, iron pots, steel knives, canvas, horses, and some Western medicines—things that facilitated hunting and gathering. And however one judges it, everyone agrees the Native American way continued what had been the way followed by all of the first human cultures on earth.

A defining characteristic of hunter-gatherer culture is its intrinsic mobility. Hunter-gatherers are always physically on the move—there is hardly a place in North America that "Indians" did not visit or pass over many times. More significantly, their cultures were internally mobile as well, oriented toward adaptive change rather than rigorous preservation. We rightly think of post–Renaissance Western culture as dynamic, but our self-transformations usually involve serious social difficulties, economic struggle, and political conflict, whereas in Native American cultures the changes normally tended to be gradual, incremental, little day-by-day adjustments, just as in such oral cultures each telling of every story, even the most sacred myths, differs at least slightly from all previous tellings.

This intrinsic mobility is most apparent in the predominant social structuring of "Indian" tribal states. The modern Western state is an abstract entity defined by its total contrast to each individual within it; the state exists only in dialectical tension with personal individuality. Most Native North American states were difficult to distinguish from the totality of the individuals composing the society. This kind of collective nation can act only when more or less everybody more or less agrees. In the Native American view, the individual is supremely important because his or her integrity is never sacrificed to an abstract state. The price is individuality attained and defined as total acculturation: the individual has no identity that can be separated from his or her willing participation in the collective culture. The individuality of a Navajo, Comanche, etc.,

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consists in his or her manifesting fully but in a unique fashion Navajoness, Comanche-ness, etc. This means that the culture is perpetually under the pressure of differing individuals to adapt minutely to accommodate the idiosyncrasies of the persons currently constituting it. Thus traditional "Indian" culture is more continuously, if much more quietly, dynamic than ours—it is always adjusting itself (mostly by extremely fine tuning) to ever-changing internal and external circumstances.

I believe that the attraction of "Indian" cultures for many contemporary non-natives arises largely from the appeal of their mobile cultures, because they offer a positive and continuous function for individual action. The Western, Enlightenment-originated conception of the state denies an individual the sense of continuously participating efficaciously as an individual in the culture. It would be surprising if Native Americans did not feel this even more strongly—hence the longing for a vanished culture in their novels. But that longing also has an appeal to postmodern non-natives dissatisfied with contemporary regimented and depersonalized living, where individuality can only be realized when merged (and so lost) into some form of identity politics. This makes fake indianness attractive, which, as Treuer implies, can produce writing unpleasantly close to real Native American fiction today, if that is unduly committed to an impossible authenticity.

The fakery might be diminished by Native American writers developing their unusual postindian situation, as Vizenor has tried to do. Having been forced into independence from their traditional cultures, Native Americans are in no way rejectors of those cultures' form. They are therefore free to draw from them, both formally and substantively, inspiration for ways of improving their-and others'-current circumstances. Traditional native cultures were intensely valued by their members because they possessed the possibility of adaptation to changes both in external environment and in internal structure produced by the individuality of those constituting the culture. Today's Native Americans are uniquely positioned by their heritage to explore how analogous adaptability might be increased in modern Western culture. They are perhaps best qualified to arouse refreshed appreciation for the social values of an individuality founded not on an exclusive acculturation but on the realization of the essential humanness that differentiates us from all other socialized species on this planet. Human societies are unique in flourishing by empowering individuality in their entire membership. Imaginative Native Americans

today could be especially helpful in breaking down Enlightenment presuppositions about state sovereignty, freeing terms like *collectivity* from the crude oversimplifications of leftist ideologues, and opening the way to a better understanding of the paradoxical complexities of human socialization. Although they would justifiably loathe the abstract language I use here, I believe that both Treuer and Sherman Alexie in their latest novels are heading in that direction. Go to it, fellas.

Notes

- 1. Treuer's latest novel, *The Translation of Dr. Apelles*, is by far his best. The book's key plot-structure device is a "translation" of an "original" Ojibwe text, which in fact is a version of the Greek pastoral *Daphnis and Chloe*. In developing this ingenious double inversion he unwittingly validates some of the conclusions of my analysis two or three decades ago of Antony Mattina's translation of the Coleville Peter Seymour's remarkable five-hour retelling in his native language of a European story, *The Golden Woman*.
- 2. I am baffled by Treuer's omission of repetition, which is first on my list because it is so obvious. Later Treuer mentions parataxis, to my mind a key to understanding the psychology of both traditional storytelling and listening. Contrast the native "Bears hibernate. It starts to snow." with our hypotactic "When it starts to snow, bears hibernate." The native form does not imply that the bears cause snow, but it checks unthinking acceptance of familiar causal relationships, opening a space for imaginative exploration of various dimensions of the connections between two complicated phenomena. A student once said to me, "These stories are short, but I spend a lot of time on them because they make me think about every cause-effect relation I've always taken for granted."
- 3. There is a long tradition of Native Americans deploying Western literary forms ironically, beginning with John Rollin Ridge's *Joaquin Murietta* (1854). This novel uses the dime-novel form satirically to expose the hypocrisy of American assaults on both Mexican and "Indian" cultures in California. But Welch conspicuously avoids this structural irony.

Remembrances of Left Pasts

History, Memory, and the Literary Left: Modern American Poetry, 1935–1968

by John Lowney
Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2006. 287 pages

Tyrus Miller

John Lowney's History, Memory, and the Literary Left considers in detail, and with a focus primarily on single, large-scale poetic sequences or volumes, six poets who rarely get mentioned together in the same breath: Muriel Rukeyser, Elizabeth Bishop, Langston Hughes, Gwendolyn Brooks, Thomas McGrath, and George Oppen. Indeed, if one adds a preliminary discussion of Wallace Stevens in the first, more general chapter titled "The Janitor's Poems of Every Day," one might legitimately wonder whether Lowney has not summoned us for a late-modernist poetry version of a Steve Allen gathering of deceased greats, where William Blake and Einstein will anatomize the vicissitudes of human existence alongside Shakespeare, Hitler, and Moses. It is, however, the burden of Lowney's argument that he has assembled more than a colloquy of illustrious ghosts, and that a particular weave of cultural affinities and affiliations, ultimately knotted into the broader fabric of an American society shaped by the Popular Front of the 1930s and its aftermath, holds these otherwise divergent poets in unforeseen and mostly unacknowledged community.

Despite some of the examples it discusses, History, Memory, and the Literary Left is not for the most part a book that deals with the 1930s as a distinct chronological slice in which such-and-such a writer produced such-and-such a set of works. It is rather about the "long 1930s" in American left poetics, an historical space-time that extends, through complex dynamics of memory, nostalgic longing, self-criticism, and poetic re-elaboration or even revisionary "correction," well into later parts of the century in the lives and works of certain left-wing poets. More than just a focused study of a period or literary group, Lowney's book can thus best be seen to contribute to the ongoing reappraisal of twentieth-century American left-wing writing impelled by the archeological salvage work of scholars such as Cary Nelson in Repression and Recovery and Michael

Denning in The Cultural Front and elaborated in the diverse researches of Alan Wald, Barbara Foley, Walter Kalaidjian, Michael Davidson, Rachel Blau Du Plessis, Michael North, Aldon Nielsen, Michael Thurston, and other scholars of American literary history.

Lowney's particular slice of this expanding field is politically conscious, left-oriented, late-modernist poetry. This multiply qualified designation has a useful precision for determining and delimiting the object of his critical discussion. Lowney does not really discuss at length the poetic avant-garde (in a stricter sense) and its utopian brand of politics, nor does he consider in detail the thicker cultural context formed by numerous "minor" poets who, however functionally significant their production might have been in their moment, fall well short of the formal and intellectual excellence of the poets he treats. Instead, he is primarily concerned with how several highly self-conscious, learned (if often largely self-taught), and technically gifted poets dealt with a crisis of representation precipitated by the social crises of the 1930s, along with the new hopes—too soon dashed—that the Popular Front fostered for alternative publics and alternative idioms to communicate artistically with them.

Lowney structures each of his chapters in two major parts: a discussion of an individual poet's situation in and relation to the 1930s and his or her affiliations with left-wing cultural organizations and cultural concerns, followed by the closer explication of a key work by that writer. The works discussed include Muriel Rukeyser's innovative use of documentary materials in her 1938 sequence The Book of the Dead, which deals with the notorious Gauley Bridge silicosis scandal of the early to mid-1930s; Elizabeth Bishop's Key West poems from North and South; Langston Hughes's assemblage of socially coded verbal riffs, Montage of a Dream Deferred; Gwendolyn Brooks's engagement with Chicago's modernist architecture and the decay of its urbanist utopia in In the Mecca (which in 1968 offered a hinge between an earlier Popular Front politics and a developing Black Arts militancy); Thomas McGrath's long autobiographical poem of the geography and history of the suppression of popular politics in the United States; and George Oppen's austere confrontation of his communist-influenced politics of the 1930s and 40s with the social realities of 1960s New York in Of Being Numerous.

The poets and texts Lowney has selected allow him not only to illustrate the overall issue of how midcentury leftist poetry adhered to, memorialized, and worked through the recent past, especially the cultural

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politics of the Popular Front. They also give him the means to explore the complex, contradictory, and internally conflictual nature of a heterogeneous social alliance, a counterhegemonic bloc like the Popular Front. Thus, in addition to his main theme—or, better put, as a specification and concretization of it—he also explores the roles that race, gender, geographical location, and location in the rural-urban divide played in these specific poets' treatment of the 1930s legacy. He is particularly attentive to the difference that geography makes in poetic memory, as well as to the economic unevenness that accompanies the United States' great geographical diversity. Rukeyser's West Virginia, Bishop's Key West, Hughes's Harlem, Brooks's Chicago, McGrath's North Dakota, and Oppen's New York thus, in Lowney's view, represent radically different poetic perspectives on a shared experience of social crisis. Indeed, because of the notable geographical span of Lowney's selection—I raise this more as an observation than a criticism—California as a sociogeographical perspective is likewise notable in its near absence here; it appears only marginally through the Los Angeles of McGrath and the San Francisco of late Oppen. Kenneth Rexroth and Kenneth Patchen, for example, who shared analogous trajectories from their commitments to 1930s proletarian poetics to an anarchist-tinged, West Coast visionary romanticism, might have offered an instructive alternative perspective on Lowney's theme from what Oppen called "the edge of the continent" (22), which for California's left-wing writers was as much a condition of poetic and political subjectivity as it was a geographic site.

Lowney does not cast his poetic examples in a merely documentary or illustrative mould. He has a distinct case to make about the role of poetry in the process of remembering, memorializing, mourning, and extending the cultural legacy of the 1930s, and as a consequence he attends to rhetorical and formal-stylistic aspects of the poems as well as their evidentiary value in a historical argument. Typical of his attempt to grasp the works as articulate wholes in context is his appreciation of how form, rhetorical address, social reference, and material context (in this case, publication) work together in Hughes's *Montage*:

The dialogic sequencing of poems throughout *Montage* suggests how Hughes is dramatizing a Harlem "community in transition" through his translation of bebop's rapid rhythmic and harmonic changes. The sudden, unpredictable shifts in voice, mood, and

dramatic scene convey a sense of anxiety, fragmentation, and urgency. . . . The continuities and discontinuities between established public and emerging counterpublic spheres are implicit not only in Hughes's bebop sequencing of poems but also in the sites where the poems were initially published. . . . Like the dialogue of performative styles that takes place throughout *Montage*, the implicit dialogue of literary publics suggests Hughes's simultaneous appeal to emergent black counterpublics and more established African American and Popular Front publics. (101–02)

Lowney's social-rhetorical approach (publics and counterpublics) and historical investigation of material context (philological information about publication contexts) thus do not preclude his attending to compositional features of the poems such as sequencing, sound structure, and image (which with Hughes often means socially inflected images of voice as much as visual image or figural language). On the contrary, such formal analysis is a necessary complement and concretization of the social and historical analysis, which for its part moves the results of formal analysis beyond self-legitimating "formalist" relations. One of the salutary aspects of Lowney's work is that it demonstrates in practice that it is possible to get past the artificial but debilitating critical impasse that unfortunately despite important efforts to the contrary—continues to impose itself between historicist or cultural studies methods and formalist readings of poetry, often to such an extent that cultural studies scholars and historicist critics leave poetry aside in favor of other materials apparently more tractable to their critical methods. More implicitly, therefore, Lowney also suggests that socially engaged criticism should not shy away from poetry, even poetry of the highest density and complexity.

The crux of the matter may be the often-blurred distinction between immediacy, in which other media and genres may indeed surpass the possibilities of poetry, and sociopolitical efficacy, to which poetry should not too easily relinquish its claim. Rather, poetry must ask—and Lowney suggests that it has asked, consistently, since midcentury—what sort of efficacy and in accomplishing what? One could say specifically that for Lowney, the poems he has selected for critical discussion constitute as much metahistorical models as they do historical documents, and hence such poetry functions as much to shape and differentiate historical contexts as to illustrate and reflect them. Implicitly, to take this argument to

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its logical conclusion, Lowney may also be claiming that in its ability to reshape our understanding of history, in its complex integuments with our memories and life experiences, lies one of poetry's most authentic possibilities for engagement in social and historical work, for being "political." By revealing the degree to which society, history, and individual experience are not simply givens to which poetry responds or ignores but rather domains that are themselves symbolically shaped and reshaped, poetry resonates with other forms of individual and collective transformative practice. Although poetry's role in this process may be more indirect and complexly mediated than, say, an agitational proclamation or speech, its effects may ultimately be more far-reaching and enduring, persisting for decades and—literally—changing the lives of individuals touched by its insights and perturbations. This, for Lowney, is ultimately the message that post—Popular Front left poetry labored long and hard to elaborate, and which lends it, even to the present day, an enduring actuality.

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The Bloomsbury Enlightenment Project

Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde: War, Civilization, Modernity

by Christine Froula New York: Columbia University Press, 2005 (paperback 2007). 428 pages

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Christine Froula's scholarship has done much to transform modernist studies at the millennium and to encourage teachers and scholars to reconceptualize the "received truths" that aggregate around high modernism. Her work on James Joyce has revolutionized pedagogical approaches to this canonical giant of Irish studies, and more recently she has made a successful attempt to demolish stereotyped images of Virginia Woolf as the haughty, aristocratic, tea-pouring Queen of Bloomsbury.

Countermanding prevalent notions of a Bloomsbury aesthetic spawned by the late-nineteenth-century "art for art's sake" movement, Froula turns to social and political tenets emergent from the eighteenthcentury Enlightenment project configured by Kant in Germany and by revolutionary, encyclopedic philosophers of human freedom in France. The Bloomsbury group, she insists, "carried forward and made new the Enlightenment project's self-critical and emancipatory force" (xii). Politically engaged and intellectually astute, Woolf distinguished herself "as powerfully analytic, critical, and imaginative a proponent as the Englightment project has had in the last century" (xii). Able to connect the high ideals of civilization with issues of class discrimination, racial bigotry, and a viciously unfair sex/gender economy, this Bloomsbury author functioned as spokesperson for the evolution of a sensus communis demanding the production of a heretofore unimagined "civilization that has never existed" (xiii). With John Maynard Keynes, Lytton Strachey, Leonard Woolf, and Sigmund Freud numbered among her mentors, Woolf reacted to the inequities residual in Europe after the Great War and analyzed, Cassandralike, patriarchal and authoritarian forces that inadvertently colluded with the rise of fascism in Europe during the 1930s. Never had the causes of freedom, democracy, and women's rights been so imperiled and so

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little understood. Beset by unendurable personal losses and overwhelming cultural trauma, Woolf persisted in the "struggle to forge common values" (32) in a brave new world whose "now global public" was being summoned to intellectual arms. In *A Room of One's Own*, writes Froula, she "opens the door to a public arena and calls women-as-civilization's-creatures to speak on equal terms" (32).

In chapter 2, "Rachel's Great War," Froula contends that Woolf selfconsciously "sailed her first heroine, Rachel Vinrace, through a gap in empire" (37) to challenge Joseph Conrad's 1899 novella Heart of Darkness and its astonishing if unquestioned assumption that "men and women collaborate in history's lies and delusions, which persist under the sign of Eros" (37). If Rachel seems raw and uninitiated, her adolescent demeanor reflects the diminished resources of a girl whose education has been confined to sporadic tutorial sessions punctuating a life of sheltered ignorance in the company of two well-meaning Victorian aunts. Pleading for entrance into the male academy of learning, she remains naively unaware that the Oxbridge door to education may lead to a claustrophobic tunnel of misogynist, racist, and imperialistic values. Woolf's Voyage Out distinguishes itself as a profoundly self-conscious postcolonial narrative, critical of European imperialism and subsequent efforts to tame the savage heathen-from Renaissance voyages of conquest to twentieth-century global capitalism.

The last Victorian bastion to collapse in The Voyage Out is the institution of marriage. Rachel Vinrace and Terence Hewet are both fiercely independent spirits, jealous of their privacy and contemptuous of conventional wedlock. In the jungles of South America they begin to construct an egalitarian relationship and momentarily forge an amorous affiliation exempt from the exigencies of conjugal masquerade. This brief truce in the ongoing battle of the sexes, however, offers little more than a transient solution to the war between men and women generated by Edwardian convention. Confronted with the threat of subaltern status dictated by connubial scripts of dependence and inauthenticity, Woolf's heroine rebels against the specter of traditional wedlock by hysterically enacting the tragic fate of a doomed, melodramatic heroine. "In condemning the world's conventional 'lies' about love and marriage, Rachel wages her Great War for 'the truth'" (60)—and perhaps wins a pyrrhic victory over the cultural constrictions imposed by a gendered economy of sex-role stereotypes.

In 1897 the 15-year-old Virginia Stephen began studying Greek with Dr. George Warr at King's college, then continued her classical training under the tutelage of Clara Pater and Janet Case. Woolf's educational encounter with Greek language and literature apparently sowed the seeds of a radical feminist rejection of nationalism and English jingoism predicated on a cultural alliance with classical Greece. With an ideology molded by Pater and Case as well as her friend Jane Harrison, Woolf turned an astute and skeptical eye on Greek elegiac celebrations of male heroism in the face of death, buttressed by female lamentations over the loss of stalwart youth cut down in their prime. Filtering a new, experimental prose style through the "ventriloquized" voice of an essayist-narrator, she set about shattering and re-forming the structure of the novel by fabricating a searing fictional indictment of those gray-haired men in Whitehall who connived in the military sacrifice of young men like Jacob Flanders in the muddy trenches of the Great War. Jacob "dies in the gap between a founding ideal of European civilization—summed up as the 'Greek myth' or 'illusion'—and modern barbarity" (64). Imbricated into the ideological state apparatus of heroic self-sacrifice, Woolf's naive protagonist unconsciously assimilates the Roman imperialistic rhetoric purveyed by Latin texts that structure his understanding of manly behavior in a chivalric society worshipful of age-old myths that encourage militaristic warmongering and the political exploitation of young men coerced into the dubious pleasures of testosterone-driven aggression. In postwar Britain "Homeric illusion becomes disillusion; story, questioning; divinely sanctioned lies, the private and public deceits that strangle ... young lives; ... epic tragedy, the struggle for an international civilization" (67). Deceived by the archaic detritus of civilization's outmoded patriotic projects, classically trained youth willfully emulate the Greek and Roman heroes of their childhood and blindly transfer the competitive "team spirit" of Eton and Rugby from British public school soccer fields to the catastrophic fields of Flanders and beyond.

One stage onward in the elegy for a lost generation, Woolf projects the lunatic disillusionment of the cynical and mentally maimed war veteran Septimus Smith into a protracted elegy for military sacrifice and for the lingering effects of "shell shock," afflicting more than a quarter of the soldiers who survived the unspeakable horrors of combat during the 1914–18 war. Chapter 4, "Mrs. Dalloway's Postwar Elegy," originally published in Modernism/Modernity, forms the scholarly keystone of Froula's

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critical study and elegantly testifies to the power and intellectual resonance of Woolf's ambitious Enlightenment project. In choosing the communal form of postwar elegy, Woolf renounces the kind of rage that might "veer from symbolic expression to actual murder or suicide" and "pervert symbolic consolation into sacrificial violence in the failed mourning of revenge tragedy" (89). It is interesting that Woolf's holograph draft of "The Prime Minister," the urnarrative of this elegiac novel, suggests the possibility of Smith's manic enactment of violence as he fantasizes assassinating the prime minister, becoming a "martyr" and not only killing himself but also making his corporeal remains available for cannibalistic (and eucharistic) consumption by starving refugees from eastern Europe. Woolf's inaugural sketch of this troubled war veteran proves decidedly more violent than her revised novelistic version of Smith as ecological mystic and prophetic seer. Her fictional portrait of Septimus reflects an amalgamation of Rupert Brooke, sacrificed on the front, with manic visions undoubtedly gleaned from personal experience. As Froula explains, the "novel's genetic text illuminates Woolf's transmutation of her own harrowing 'madness,' and of the losses, grief, and rage that fueled it, into an elegiac work of art that might influence the world" (118). The character of Septimus represents Woolf's "fictional façade over autobiographical truth in a work of art that arraigns its civilization. . . . In ventriloquizing her 'mad . . . me' through Septimus, Woolf heeds yet eludes the censors" (124) and exposes the social, familial, and sexual violence at the heart of British culture. For Froula, Mrs. Dalloway "projects the dialectic of mourning into urgent social critique and contestation of the future" (89).

In To the Lighthouse, Woolf's artistic alter ego, Lily Briscoe, continues the work of mourning in a novel written as an auto/biographical elegy to the memory of father and mother, the self-pitying Leslie Stephen and the inimitable center of childhood memory and imagination, Julia Prinsep Duckworth Stephen. In this modern aesthetic and emotional odyssey, Lily's painterly "quest subsumes the mother's loss within the difference intrinsic to being as such and leads through adventures of mourning and creativity past mere substitutes for the lost mother to things in themselves" (131). In a brilliant amalgamation of Clive Bell's aesthetic theory of "significant form" with the terror of abstraction embedded at the heart of philosophical mortality and contingency, Froula offers a convincing portrait of a modern painter heroically seeking "to wrest enduring forms from nature's flux" (140) by a "generous, joyful deployment of doubt's

emancipatory and creative powers" (139). The eternal antagonist is always and everywhere the shattering loss of a *heimlich* maternal territory, fore-shadowing the ineluctable threat of individual annihilation—"humanity's fragile contingency in face of nature and time and its dread of nature's arbitrariness" (147).

Working through the historical romance of Orlando and the feminist polemic of A Room of One's Own, Froula boldly interprets The Waves from the angle of "its complex genesis" and disinters, through various draft versions, the original female voice of Woolf's "mystical" and "eyeless" play-poem. Here again a Kantian aesthetic informs Woolf's Englightenment project. One of the most fascinating dimensions of Froula's interpretation of this remarkable experiment in lyrical fiction is the provocative suggestion

that aesthetics converges with politics in the figure of the [woman] in *The Waves*—the subject as [woman], under erasure, there yet not there; bracketed in recognition of her vanishing, yet preserved in recognition of her status as bodily, natural, historical origin. (177)

Whereas most critics have focused on the spectral but heroic figure of Percival, the lost leader whose death cements the communal mourning of six friends whose lives unfold in the course of the novel's protracted diurnal pattern, Froula turns her attention to the female presence that survives in phantom traces of an oceanic landscape dominant in the text's interludes. In the final version of this unique fictional opus, Woolf continues to represent the history of the world from its very beginning but "forgets Genesis and gender altogether. . . . No story, no authority, domesticates nature's violence or mitigates death's horror; no telos redeems human suffering" (202). Froula's reading of *The Waves* is suggestive and original in its exposition of an intriguing thesis connecting the book with the "new physics of the novel's modernist moment" and its reliance on particle physics to "displace the Newtonian either/or logic of common sense with the both/and logic of the quantum universe" (204).

In the 1930s Woolf turned her attention to what she enigmatically called the "sexual life of women." Gender intersected with public and private (internalized) censorship, structures of patriarchal power in the home and in the sphere of political authority, professions for women and culturally imposed silences dictated by gender and class. Her amalgama-

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tion of fiction with essay in *The Pargiters* metamorphosed into the epic novel *The Years*, then resurfaced in her powerful antiwar polemic *Three Guineas*. Woolf

ultimately transformed *The Pargiters*' collective "talking cure" into *The Years*' talking symptoms: . . . [W]hat begins as a history of women's sexual life ends veiled in enigmatic allegory, as if in an involuntary hystericization of her text. (214)

In *The Pargiters: A Novel-Essay*, Woolf planned an alternation of essays on English women's entry into the professions with an historical novel about the fictional Pargiter family as its generations evolve from 1800 to 2032. She announces as her primary purpose the long overdue slaying of Coventry Patmore's infamous Victorian "Angel in the House," who continues to linger as a spectral presence of shame and self-censorship in women's writing and public speech well into the twentieth century. Behind the collective female unconscious of shame elicited by passion and sexual desire lurks the looming figure of Woolf's half-brother Gerald Duckworth, depicted in her memoir "A Sketch of the Past" in the persona of a bestial hominid presence reflected in the Talland House looking glass as part of a scene labeled by Froula "Self-Portrait with Beast" (227). Woolf confessed her early childhood molestation in a 1941 letter to Ethel Smyth, wherein she continues to be haunted by "nightmare phantoms and hallucinations" (236) evinced by her half-brother's sexual molestation.

The shame of that experience is transferred fictionally to Rose Pargiter's shocking encounter with a leering exhibitionist exposing himself and presumably masturbating as the young child approaches the "enemy" at a pillar box. Elliptical allusions to unspeakable violation cannot be uttered by the traumatized girl, who later buries her misery beneath adult political action and salves psychic wounds by repressing fear, rage, guilt, and shame in a "distinguished career as a militant suffragist who survives imprisonment and force-feeding" (238). Similarly, the artist figure of Elvira originates in *The Pargiters* as a wounded but articulate prophetess heralding arboreal visions "of blight and potential rebirth," lost in a "struggle that finally evades tragedy and elegy to end in the repression of history, the loss of loss" (242). "In rewriting a psychic trauma as a physical injury" in *The Years*, Woolf transmogrifies the visionary Elvira into the more repressed and cryptic figure of Sara, who "does not so much critique her culture but secede from it" (249), trailing Derridean traces of

the wordless agony of Philomela and the tragic heroine Antigone, females sacrificed to patriarchal authority and "buried alive" in muted martyrdom (249). The Years, ironically, proved to be Woolf's most marketable novel and a "best-seller in America" (256).

In her bold polemical essay Three Guineas "Saint Virginia" (262) finally talks back to the Christian epistolary mandates of St. Paul as well as to the priests, professors, doctors, and ministers enshrined through contemporary monuments in St. Paul's Cathedral in London. Using the "thick description" of literary anthropology, Froula offers a scintillating explication of Woolf's most controversial work by situating its cultural critique in the social and anthropological contexts examined by René Girard in Violence and the Sacred and The Scapegoat. Froula reminds us that Woolf has freely drawn on anthropological theories gleaned from Sir James Frazer's discussion of vegetation myths in The Golden Bough to enrich her polemical antifascist and antipatriarchal arguments in Three Guineas—a work that seeks "to expose the scapegoating of women as the structural act of barbarism that founds the masculine public sphere" and to insist that "the fight for civilization, peace, and freedom against war and tyranny entails disabling the mechanism of collective violence as such" (260). Brashly and idiosyncratically, Woolf dares to suggest subtle, unrecognized similarities between patriarchal institutions operative in the British family and maledominated professions and the looming fascism of political tyrants like Hitler and Mussolini. She exhorts her countrymen to crush the dictator in their own country before embarking on military aggression against the monstrous powers of fascist Europe.

By the time Woolf had begun working on her last novel, Between the Acts, the fascist monster was threatening to engulf Europe, and England was besieged by German war planes daily bombing the Sussex country-side. Miss LaTrobe, an "outsider" lesbian artist given a shady history of so-called "illegitimate" maternity and entrepreneurial ingenuity in the typescript of Pointz Hall, insists on audience participation in the public spectacle of British history via the production of an annual village pageant. A postmodern artist determined to shock her spectators into unanticipated self-reflection, this "bossy" experimental director nudges a small segment of British society to move from the contemplation of "little England" to a potential understanding of the public voice and democratic spirit threatened by totalitarian political forces. Froula returns to her original ground of Kantian philosophy, filtered through the con-

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temporary interpretive voice of Hannah Arendt, to depict LaTrobe as a dialogic artist calling for a "we" summoned in freedom and community, "with roots in European democracy's Athenian origins" (319). The spectators function as the play's "protagonist, whom art enables momentarily to escape their—our—thick little egos to see ourselves reflected in the future of the community and human species" (322).

Froula ends her analysis with an optimistic interpretation of Woolf's last work of fiction and eschews protracted discussion of the author's suicide to conclude that "Woolf's legacy and Bloomsbury's is the unfinished and unfinishable fight for civilization" (324). Even as that struggle continues daily in ongoing military conflicts that threaten "civilization" in the twenty-first century, Woolf's ambitious Enlightenment project passionately engages ever new audiences of devoted readers. Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde is an extraordinary study that successfully situates Woolf's experimental fiction in a contemporary literary criticism inflected by cultural studies, ethics, feminist theory, political purpose, and philosophical speculation. Rooted in a Kantian aesthetic and subsequently influenced by thinkers as diverse as Frazer and Freud, Virginia Woolf produced a remarkable body of work that deserves sustained attention. Christine Froula's superb critical text presents us with a rich and provocative analysis that will surely be distinguished as a major influence on the way students, teachers, and common readers alike understand Woolf's genius well into the new millennium.

Since the publication of Froula's book in 2005, a number of scholars have further explored specific dimensions of the Bloomsbury canon. Anne E. Fernald reminds us that Woolf was one of the best-read writers of the twentieth century, and that Woolf's familiarity with a wide array of literary and cultural texts proved a powerful influence on her self-conscious development of a feminist philosophy. Ann Ronchetti focuses critical attention on the artist, society, and sexuality in Woolf's novels, while Jane De Gay looks at Woolf's novels and the literary past. Analyzing issues of mourning and trauma, Patricia Moran considers literary resonances of post-traumatic stress disorder, as do contributors to the book edited by David Eberly and myself. The long-delayed publication of Douglas W. Orr's work on Woolf's illnesses, edited by Wayne K. Chapman in 2004, raises anew questions concerning medical diagnosis. And finally, the recent

release of Jane Goldman's Cambridge Introduction to Virginia Woolf testifies to the ongoing vitality of Bloomsbury studies at every level of academic interest.

Note

1. For a recent transcription of selected passages from Woolf's "Prime Minister" holograph, see my essay "Modernism, Trauma, and Narrative Reformulation."

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A Test Case for Cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the Nation

by Rebecca Walkowitz

New York: Columbia University Press, 2006. 288 pages

Paul Stasi

In 1798 Immanuel Kant sat down to answer what seemed to him an "old question," namely "is the human race constantly progressing?" This question, Kant argued, cannot be answered by an appeal to experience, for even if progress is detected in the present this is no guarantee that it will continue. Yet for the concept of progress to have a human meaning it must "be connected to some experience" (142) that could demonstrate at least the possibility of what Kant elsewhere called "perpetual peace," an idea he attached to a cosmopolitan interest in universal humanity. Such an experience, he declared, had occurred: the French Revolution, or rather "the mode of thinking of the spectators which reveals itself publicly in this game of great revolutions" (143). This mode of thinking is manifested in "a universal yet disinterested sympathy" for the revolution, despite the dangers associated with such partiality. Kant here walks a fine line between reason and emotion. Progress is observed in an affective experience called forth by the aesthetic apprehension of revolutionary events, and this experience yields a mode of thinking that is "disinterested" in the sense of lacking personal gain, and at the same time necessarily interested, insofar as it contains the potential for great personal loss. Kant here envisions a "moral predisposition" (144) toward the human race as a whole that is constructed by an affective and fundamentally aesthetic experience.

I raise Kant at the outset because the problems he confronted—the relationship between reason and affect, universal laws and the messy realm of experience, distance and proximity—have haunted cosmopolitan discourse ever since. Cosmopolitanism, as a rational ideal, is difficult to refute, but can it capture our affective loyalties in the way those smaller, less rational groupings of family, tribe, and nation have? Is it possible, as Bruce Robbins puts it, to feel global?

To answer these questions, Rebecca Walkowitz's Cosmopolitan Style turns to the modernist novel. For Walkowitz, modernism provides an ex-

cellent test case for cosmopolitanism because it simultaneously enhances and disables "local points of view," elucidating "the global networks in which even the most local experiences participate" while also suggesting "that these networks change what local experiences are" (2). This aspect of modernism's project, she contends, lays the groundwork both for contemporary discourses of cosmopolitanism and for a certain subset of postmodern novels. In chapters on Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Kazuo Ishiguro, Salman Rushdie, and W. G. Sebald, Walkowitz develops what she calls a "critical cosmopolitanism," one that reflects "on the history, uses, and interests of cosmopolitanism in the past" while simultaneously exposing the connections between "narrative and political ideals of progress, aesthetic and social demands for literalism, and sexual and conceptual decorousness" (5). Building tacitly on the body of scholarship that has linked the development of the novel to that of the nation, Walkowitz suggests that modernism's departure from traditional narrative constitutes a critique of the "narrative patterns of attentiveness, relevance, perception, and recognition" that help create homogenous national affiliations (6). Instead, she seeks "new conceptions of national culture and international belonging" that assume "more integration among cultures and less uniformity within them" (14). Walkowitz's aim is thus to reimagine cosmopolitanism as a flexible set of allegiances and dispositions that manifest themselves in everyday experiences and to see how these experiences, in turn, contest and alter those same allegiances.

We find here a dialectic between what Walkowitz refers to as the philosophical tradition of cosmopolitan discourse, which emphasizes detachment, and the anthropological, which emphasizes lived experience. These two moments—versions of the abstract and the particular—play out through the book as the relationship between the project of critical cosmopolitanism and the specific styles of each of Walkowitz's six novelists. These novelists, then, constitute the kind of cosmopolitan community she describes, one marked by "contestation rather than by consensus" (30). For this reason, each chapter focuses on what Walkowitz finds to be the hallmark of a particular novelist's style: Conrad's naturalness, Joyce's triviality, Woolf's evasions, Ishiguro's treason, Rushdie's mix-ups, and Sebald's vertigo.

This approach has the considerable virtue of creating a rubric flexible enough to forge meaningful connections among the diverse aesthetic projects of the writers Walkowitz examines while still acknowledging their

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considerable differences. And Walkowitz's discussion of cosmopolitanism, in both its description of the current conversation and its prescription for what a progressive cosmopolitanism might look like, is insightful and productive, making her book an important contribution to this body of scholarship. Ultimately, though, Walkowitz's rubric of critical cosmopolitanism may more aptly describe the not-quite-postmodern novels she analyzes than it does their modernist predecessors.

Cosmopolitan Style begins with Conrad, demonstrating clearly his interest in denaturalizing cultural affiliations. In a reading of The Secret Agent, Walkowitz argues that "Conrad links national identities to conditions of visibility, how people are perceived, rather than to conditions of existence, what people really are" (38). Thus when the Assistant Commissioner, seeking to infilitrate the ranks of the anarchist community in London, becomes a stranger by "speaking English too well" (46), he demonstrates the constitutive relationship between notions of the foreign and the local. Foreignness reveals the performative nature of the local, its legibility resting on codes of perception rather than essential characteristics: on assessments of how accurately one speaks English or whether one is wearing the appropriate anarchist uniform of "collars turned up and soft hats rammed down" (47). Walkowitz uses this observation to revise Ian Watt's famous description of Conradian decoding (175-79). For Watt, such decoding dramatizes the gap between impression and understanding, showing the mind's slow attempt to construct meaning out of inchoate sensory input. In contrast, Walkowitz describes decoding as the recognition of previously encountered signs. "Perception," she writes, "is constituted by details [one has] already learned to look for" (52). Conrad's naturalness, then, is a style that highlights the artificiality of conceptions of the natural.

This aspect of Conrad's fiction finds a contemporary parallel in the novels of Ishiguro, which in Walkowitz's account embed their allegories of national belonging "in narratives about the fictionalization of cultural truths" (111). In one of the book's most interesting sections, Walkowitz demonstrates the way critics of Ishiguro's work continuously impose notions of Japaneseness onto his novels, even as these novels work against such "fixing of national identities" (114). Furthermore Ishiguro seems to knowingly invite such readings, only to refute them. The story "A Family Supper," for instance, presents us with two suicides, one the inadvertent death of the narrator's mother—which Walkowitz convincingly describes

as a parody of seppuku—and the other the suicide of his father's business partner after his business declines due to foreign competition. The story ends with the surprising revelation that the father does not believe his partner's suicide to have been a necessary response to his business failings, thus toying with the (Western) reader's desire to imagine ritual suicide as a universally valorized part of Japanese culture. And yet according to Ishiguro, the cultural meaning of suicide is as variable in Japan as in any other country. Against the influx of foreigners, the business partner turned to a traditional Japanese ritual that his contemporaries had rejected. In this way Ishiguro's depiction of seppuku demonstrates both this ritual's presence within Japanese culture and the conflicted meanings that surround it. Seppuku functions, for the business partner, as nostalgia: "it seems to reproduce, but in fact merely invents a purely Japanese Japan" (119). Walkowitz nicely sums up the effect of this conflict on the story's readers:

If readers see suicide as an essential, defining characteristic of Japaneseness, they may miss its fictionalization, but if they see it only as a Western fiction, they risk underestimating its position within Japanese culture.

The meanings of Ishiguro's novels emerge, then, from the conflicts between competing national and cultural frameworks.

Walkowitz's discussion of Salman Rushdie likewise exemplifies her ability to draw out points of commonality among her writers without eliding their differences. Walkowitz describes Rushdie's work as characterized by mix-up, "a mélange of a mélange, not a representative democracy of indistinguishable parts but a jumble of parts that are themselves already jumbled" (139). She then contrasts this mix-up to Sebald's strategy of "unassimiliation," which "does not mix up so much as assemble, display, and loosely hold together" (153). As with Ishiguro, Sebald's not-quite-British status yields the kinds of "contextual differences" constitutive of critical cosmopolitanism, as his works "remind us often that they are written, and need to be read, within and across several political histories" (154). And Walkowitz helpfully contrasts both writers to Rushdie, who does not so much compare cultures as suggest that all cultures are already intermingled, a fact that makes it difficult to weigh them against each other. For how can you compare two objects that are already constituted by each other?

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In each case, then, Walkowitz's authors denaturalize cultures, revealing them to be contested social processes that allow for various forms of communal affiliation. Her readings demonstrate, furthermore, how the competing international visions of these writers—their varying commitments to cosmpolitanism—manifest themselves at the level of style. Perhaps Walkowitz's best discussion of the relationship between affiliation and literary style appears in her chapter on Joyce. For Walkowitz, "Joyce's critique of decorum needs to be understood as an effort to revise literary conventions of national belonging and political assertion" (56). To make this case she develops a convincing argument about Joyce's interest in "epic triviality," describing it as a form of "intellectual vagrancy" that allows for social transformation (57). The concept of epic triviality is particularly helpful for understanding the young Stephen Dedalus as his attention shifts from the War of the Roses to the various kinds of roses in the world, to the possibility of a green rose which "you could not have" though "perhaps somewhere in the world you could" (Portrait 6; qtd. in Walkowitz 67). In depicting Stephen's errant thoughts "Joyce suggests that intellectual freedom, as exemplified by Stephen's trivial mind, establishes the conditions for political independence" (67). In the same vein, Stephen's mind wanders when confronted with the possibility of becoming a priest, an oscillation that "both constitutes intellectual freedom and also produces it: once Stephen diversifies his attention, a life of unimaginative duty repels him" (64). This is an excellent reading of this passage, one that Walkowitz links to both the "trivial air" that accompanies Stephen as he leaves the building and the disorder and misrule of his father's house (which he smilingly acknowledges will always have a stronger claim on his affections than the duty and order he seems to crave). Here epic triviality manifests itself as a critique of the loyalties demanded by both church and (imperial) state.

In a similar fashion, Woolf's evasions interrupt "the protocols of unwavering attention that she attributed to her country's most powerful social institutions" (82). And yet, as we shall see, when evasion shades into disorder—as with the shell-shocked war veteran Septimus Warren Smith—it might not be quite so liberatory. Walkowitz's reading of Woolf begins with an excellent discussion of "The Mark on the Wall," a story that proves to be about "the experience of wartime thinking" (87). "The story ends," Walkowitz notes, "with a disruption" as a voice announces

"I'm going to buy a newspaper" even though "nothing ever happens" (89). She summarizes:

Woolf contrasts the contention that "nothing ever happens" with the happenings of the story: she resists the passive experience of war by making thought happen and by arguing that what "happens" in the world involves not only the events that newspapers report but also the daily sociability that shapes, interprets, opposes, and ignores those events.

This claim then becomes the basis for a reading of Mrs. Dalloway in which Woolf's paratactic style unseats various narratives of progress and order encouraged by the British nationalist war machine, "contesting the war by rejecting its models of attention" (101).

As a description of Woolf's style this is excellent. But the chapter is less convincing when it turns to the shell-shocked Septimus Warren Smith, and here we begin to see the problem with Walkowitz's rubric as applied to works of modernism rather than to their successors. Septimus is obviously enough, a victim of British nationalism. He went to war, we learn in the novel, "to save an England which consisted almost entirely of Shakespeare's plays and Miss Isabel Poole in a green dress" (Woolf 84). His disorder, however, cannot profitably be read as a resistance to "the 'logical hierarchy' needed for patriotism and normative masculinity" (Walkowitz 93). Being a victim of a particular system does not automatically make one a viable alternative to that system. In the same way it is difficult to agree that Woolf's novel "describes a national capital full of foreigners and foreign attachments," or that these attachments—of Peter to India, of Septimus to Italy—demonstrate Woolf's investment in the project of critical cosmopolitanism. Here one feels that Walkowitz is uncomfortably forcing a discovery about Woolf's text into a predetermined frame.

Indeed, if there is a flaw to this book it is Walkowitz's tacit assumption that to highlight the social constructedness of communal forms of belonging is, in and of itself, liberatory. The modernist authors she discusses seem much more pessimistic than she is about the possibilities of avoiding inherited forms of affiliation. Consider, for instance, the case of Joyce. While Walkowitz's emphasis on his triviality is certainly productive, it must be supplemented by a reading of the Joyce who carefully correlated each moment of his novel's intellectual vagrancy to a chapter in *The Odyssey*. Certainly Eliot was wrong to think that Joyce's "mythical method" was

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meant to control the anarchy and chaos of the contemporary world, but it is at the same time difficult to believe, as Walkowitz does, that his work "rejects not only literary custom but also literary tradition" (58). Indeed, one of the key ironies of *Portrait* is Stephen's socially determined desire to be entirely free of his social order. Stephen discovers that inherited affiliations cannot be so easily overthrown, a lesson we might read as paradigmatic for modernism's own relationship to tradition. For if modernism attempts to forge new forms of community, it characteristically does so out of inherited forms of belonging. To be entirely outside of tradition leads one to "the horror" of Kurtz. Or to hurling oneself out of a window. Walkowitz's argument would benefit, then, from more attention to modernism's interest in the power of inherited traditions as they shape and are contested by the everyday. To put it another way: the everyday is not always liberatory, and it is certainly not liberatory without something against which to push. Something like this is what Joyce was after with the abstract frame he employed to depict the disordered triviality of everyday Dublin. Trying to understand this relationship is, of course, the great puzzle of Ulysses, even as it is the core challenge of cosmopolitan discourse.

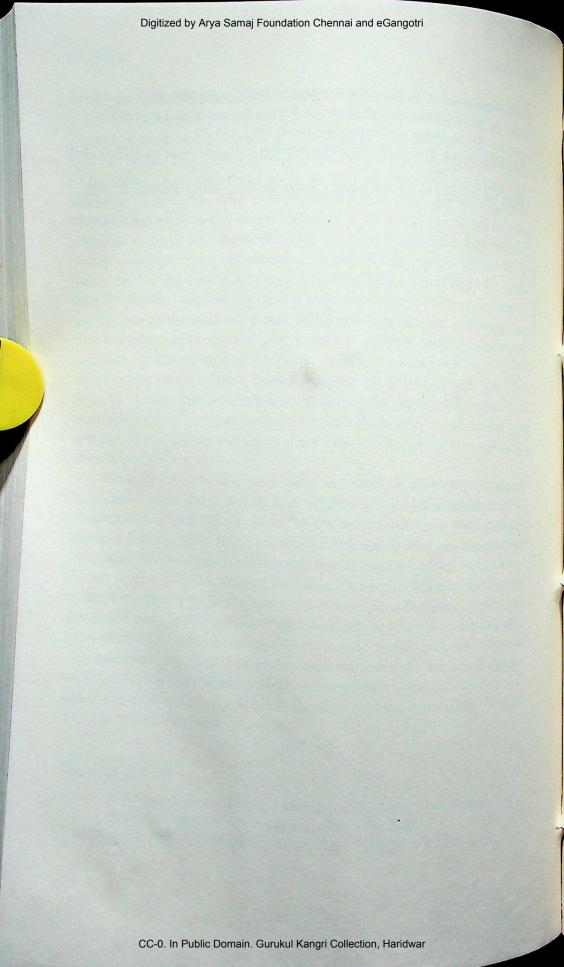
Cosmopolitan Style convinces with its assertion that contemporary cosmopolitanism—both fictive and theoretical—owes a good deal to modernist texts, and with its vision of the ways modernist style disrupts standard, homogenized forms of national belonging. But the term critical cosmopolitanism threatens to obscure the real differences between modernist and postmodernist visions of national affiliation—differences that, no doubt, owe quite a bit to the actual transformations in global capital between the early and later parts of the twentieth century. It might be best, then, to think of critical cosmopolitanism as an as-yet inchoate element of modernism that later texts inherit and expand—the tradition against which contemporary versions of the cosmopolitan push, in the continuous dialectic of universal and particular that is at the core of the notion of cosmopolitanism itself.

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Start Spreading the News:

Irony, Public Opinion, and the
Aesthetic Politics of U.S.A.

Matthew Stratton

Irony is perhaps democracy's best instrument.

—Public Opinion Quarterly 1938 (T.V. Smith 19)

In 1938, the publication of The 42nd Parallel, 1919, and The Big Money as a single novel provoked a flood of essays debating how John Dos Passos's U.S.A. related socially, aesthetically, and politically to the U.S.A.1 While assessments ranged from Lionel Trilling's ambivalent judgment that it was "the important novel of the decade" (26) to Mike Gold's bald declaration that the novel and Dos Passos himself were full of "merde," reviewers recognized the trilogy as both a new form of the novel and as a novel form of news. Jean-Paul Sartre, for example, observed that "John Dos Passos reports all his characters' utterances to us in the style of a statement to the Press" (93); Delmore Schwartz went further, asking readers to "think . . . of the newspaper as a representation of American life" and asserting that the "novel seems to ... derive from the newspaper" (229). That print journalism influenced the style of Dos Passos's innovative, "collectivist" novel shouldn't surprise even the most casual reader. The novel is not only formally marked by its salient invocations of "the news" but is also a novel thoroughly about journalism: the famously fragmented Newsreel sections comprise real and imagined newspaper headlines; several characters in the novel are journalists; and several others routinely influence the press as public relations agents.

The political implications of this intermingling of novel and news,

however, have always been more contentious. Whereas Schwartz considered U.S.A. to be a political disappointment—"the greatest monument of naturalism because it betrays so fully the poverty and disintegration inherent in that method" (245)—Sartre found that the novel instilled a "revolutionary" spirit in him and regarded Dos Passos as "the greatest writer of our time" (96). In the context of political battles about literary aesthetics and politics among the 1930s literary Left, it is unsurprising that the same novel might frustrate Partisan Review critic Schwartz yet gratify the existentialist Sartre. Like many fellow-traveling reviewers of U.S.A., Schwartz objected that the novel emphasized the negative "facts" of political oppression without delineating the positive "values" that might help readers envision the goals of political praxis. Sartre, meanwhile, found revolutionary potential in the novel's presentation of value-laden facts and in Dos Passos's refusal to compose artificially hopeful blueprints for action.

For more recent critics, Dos Passos's fragmented juxtaposition of song lyrics, speeches, and news copy is understood to exemplify a multigeneric irony, which has itself become curiously emblematic of both high modernist and high postmodernist literary practice. Although the different sections of the novel appear to be wholly separate and equal narrative creations, in the final analysis they have been understood to reflect a common goal: the mimetic representation of the gap between fact and value that is known in literary terms as irony and in political and social-historical terms as "America." As Donald Pizer has written, the "underlying motive for [Dos Passos's] distortion of the 'factual' lies in [his] powerful ironic and thus satiric vision of the immense distance between verbal construct and actuality in twentieth-century America" (185).

Until the relatively recent popularity of *The Onion* and *The Daily Show* as sources of political information as well as humor, verbal irony and news might seem to be opposites: reliable information requires that words reliably mean what they say. Yet it is precisely irony that provides a vital heuristic for *U.S.A.*'s engagement with political journalism and what might be called an aesthetics of information. Here I use aesthetics to refer not only to the conventional, formal study of art and beauty but in the full etymological sense, to refer to certain kinds of sensory, corporeal responses to certain representations, signs that do not just fall upon but actually constitute perception. This notion of aesthetics, Jacques Rancière has recently argued,

can be understood in a Kantian sense—re-examined perhaps by Foucault—as the system of a priori forms determining what presents itself to sense experience. It is a delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience. (13)

Reading the novel through these terms not only produces a particular view of U.S.A.'s political significance but also suggests the possibilities for irony to play a central role in genuinely political literary aesthetics.² To understand the novel in this light, however, one must understand how Dos Passos directly challenges a persistent Enlightenment conception of the political. The Enlightenment political ideal running from Immanuel Kant (for example in "Pax Perpetua" and "What Is Enlightenment") through the authors of The Federalist and beyond relies on a polity of citizen readers publicly using reason to evaluate information circulated via a free press. As Dos Passos and many of his contemporaries recognized, however, the rise of professional public relations around World War I starkly revealed the extent to which reading publics did not pre-exist such information but were manipulated and even constituted by it. Dos Passos's novel does more than merely document the increasingly prominent role that aestheticized information plays in political decision making: I argue that it actually articulates a radical riposte to the increasingly dominant discourses of corporate- and state-sponsored propaganda and reshapes the lessons of advertising and public relations into a political novel distinguished by what we should understand as a decidedly activist form of aesthetic irony.

U.S.A. narrates the merger of mainstream journalism and public relations on the one hand and corporate and state power on the other, showing how the mergers are not only related but mutually constitutive. Both Dos Passos and his characters understand that propaganda identifies, constitutes, and manipulates a unified, tractable public; by contrast, U.S.A. neither depicts nor produces anything resembling consensus. Rather, the trilogy offers an ironic, interpretive pluralism that is radically at odds with conventional understandings of what it means to produce useful political information: indeed, the ironies of U.S.A. seek to produce the interpretive conditions under which authentic social and political praxis itself might be possible. Put plainly, U.S.A. doesn't simply inform readers about the

material facts of American life that determine the behavior and delimit the choices made by individual political agents. Rather, it uses the form of the novel to present information as an *aesthetic* exchange, which Dos Passos thought would be necessary for new political communities to emerge and for extant, marginalized political communities to be recognized.³

Rather than relegating irony to the realm of the private and calling for public discourse to remain sincerely rational (as does liberal ironist Richard Rorty), Dos Passos shows us how radical politics might require information framed by and filtered through a very public irony. The novel's disposition toward the public, toward nations, and toward individuals actively resists resolution—not just of individual ironies but of the very problem of irony itself—to produce a definition of the United States as lack of resolution, as the unstable position between discourses of "fact" and discourses of "value." To redefine the nation thusly is to identify a fundamental tension between individual rights and collective decisions. a situation succinctly described by political theorists as "paradoxical": in the words of Wendy Brown, "democracy is governance by the people, and the people as a political mass are figured as the opposite of the state" (137), a condition that Kenneth Burke called "the essential paradox of federalism" (400) and that Chantal Mouffe has explored as The Democratic Paradox. Indeed, anticipating such recent political theory, U.S.A. shows how locating and relocating the limits of literal and figurative language might provide the genesis for a new democratic imaginary to precede new forms of political action.

The problem of news

and problems with the public

As early as 1925 Dos Passos had reminded readers that a putatively free press does not entail the free circulation of ideas or unbiased information. In *Manhattan Transfer*, for example, even a drunk thespian knows that the newspaper as "fountain of national life is poisoned at the source" by the "interests of advertisers and bondholders" (195). In *The 42nd Parallel* the public distribution of ideas is more overtly hindered: when the young Chicago boy Fenian "Mac" McCreary attempts to distribute his uncle's socialist pamphlets, he is accosted and chased away by a policeman, who demands a "permit to distribute them handbills" (25). Later, when Mac

arrives in Nevada to help print an IWW newspaper during a miners' strike, he poses as an itinerant bookseller—drawing on his early occupation as peddler of pornography, knowing that mine owners are threatened by newspapers but not by "literature"—and is allowed to pass by soldiers whose orders are to detain "goddamn agitators, the I Won't Work outfit" (91).4

The importance of a free press was explicitly addressed by the earliest theorists of American federalism, from James Madison and Alexander Hamilton to Alexis de Tocqueville, who imagined that the press would distribute objective facts to help rational citizens form judgments about affairs of state; these judgments would then be reflected in the decisions made by their political representatives. Indeed, J. Michael Sproule reminds us that even early twentieth-century muckrakers addressed their exposés to "a reading public that had been socialized to regard public opinion as the outcome of a town-meeting-like process of thoughtful deliberation and to view communication as a technical process for the transfer of information" (26).

In contrast to this dominant understanding of informative news, U.S.A. provides numerous instances in which inconvenient truths are suppressed by vested economic interests. In *The Big Money*, when journalist Mary French is assigned to report on striking steelworkers, her editor plainly tells her what kind of information he wants: "what part of Russia they were born in, how they got into this country in the first place . . . where the money comes from . . . prison records, you know" (879). French fails to grasp the editor's unsubtle suggestion that she depict the "agitators" as immigrants, communists, and criminals, and reports

the things she'd seen, the jailings, the bloody heads, the wreck of some family's parlor, sofa cut open, chairs smashed, chinacloset hacked to pieces with an ax, after the troopers had been through looking for "literature." (883)

Predictably, her editor refuses to run the story: "Well, young lady. You've written a first-rate propaganda piece for the *Nation* or some other parlorpink sheet in New York, but what the devil do you think we can do with it? This is Pittsburgh" (882). The scene pointedly illustrates the maddeningly circular character of the news and the public that informs the novel: the public remains unreceptive to information that might disrupt

its political convictions because it is never presented with such information in the first place.

Elsewhere in *U.S.A.*, the government directly censors newspapers under the auspices of war powers. In 1919, an interior decorator and war volunteer named Eveline Hutchins begins spending time with Jerry Burnham, an increasingly dissolute war correspondent working for the United Press in Paris. When he drinks too much cognac, Burnham admits to Eveline just how badly the "free" press is serving the American public:

a correspondent couldn't get to see anything anymore ...he had three or four censorships on his neck all the time and had to send out prepared stuff that was all a pack of dirty lies every word of it ... a newspaperman had been little better than a skunk before the war, but ... now there wasn't anything low enough you could call him. Eveline would try to cheer him up telling him that when the war was over he ought to write a book like *Le Feu* and really tell the truth about it. (544)

This exchange does more than simply remind readers that governmental pressure and corporate profit motives impede the clear-eyed empirical integrity of the news; it suggests that the novel—like Henri Barbusse's *Le Feu*, the first antiwar fiction to emerge from World War I—might intervene precisely when newspapers fail to "really tell the truth."

Yet Le Feu adheres to recognizable conventions of the naturalist novel in a way that U.S.A. strikingly does not. What kind of truth could Barbusse's novel tell in 1916 that was no longer possible when Dos Passos invented a radically new novelistic form in the 1930s? Why would Dos Passos reproduce, rather than openly denounce or expose, many of the patently false newspaper headlines that were printed under the dictates of various censorships? After all, whether guided by the rational and institutional dictates of classical liberalism, communism, or progressivism (or literary realism), politically useful truth might appear to be best served by rationally describing how the American and European publics were misled by such headlines, not by mimicking them. Dos Passos, however, understood that public opinion was educated not only by putatively objective facts but also by the way that information is experienced aesthetically. With the emergence of professional public relations around World War I, it became increasingly apparent that public opinion depended not

just on what facts were distributed but also on how those facts were distributed, and not just materially or economically but also aesthetically.

The rise of public relations

and the fall of the public

During World War I, the relatively new "science" of public relations was put to a most serious test. Woodrow Wilson had been re-elected to the presidency on his ability to keep the US out of war, so he knew that getting the US *into* the war presented a formidible task. In 1917, therefore, he authorized the creation of

A Division of Advertising for the purpose of receiving and directing through the proper channels the generous offers of the advertising forces of the Nation to support the effort of the Government to inform public opinion properly and adequately. (Wilson qtd. in *The Creel Report* [US Committee] 43)

The Creel Report suggests what qualifies as "proper" and "adequate" by defining its goals as "building morale, arousing the spiritual forces of the Nation, and stimulating the war will of the people" (40).⁵

George Creel, former muckraker and chairman of the new Committee for Public Information, boasted a few years later that the committee was an innovation in the history of warfare. As he reflects in his 1920 memoir *How We Advertised America*:

It was the fight for the *minds* of men, for the "conquest of their convictions," and the battle-line ran through every home in every country. It was in this recognition of Public Opinion as a major force that the Great War differed most essentially from all previous conflicts. The trial of strength was not only between massed bodies of armed men, but between opposed ideals, and moral verdicts took on all the value of military decisions. (3)

To win this trial of strength, Creel drew freely on the talents of Madison Avenue advertising executives and journalists and cultural critics such as Walter Lippmann. The committee was hugely successful, and as Dos Passos sardonically reports in *U.S.A.*, "the war was great fought from the swivel chairs of Mr. Creel's bureau in Washington" (449). Here Dos Passos

presents his readers with verbal irony in its most familiar form, reminding readers that the Great War was "great" only in the minds of those who fought with words and ideas rather than machine guns, artillery shells, and poison gas, and that the devastation of the war far outstripped any possible rhetoric of glory that motivated citizens to support the war. It is in this sense, of course, that Paul Fussell remarks that "the Great War was more ironic than any before or since" (8).

The production and comprehension of verbal irony, understood at least since Quintilian as "saying one thing while meaning another," destabilizes ostensibly reliable linguistic reference, and throughout this section of U.S.A., which offers a biography of the great anti-Great War critic Randolph Bourne, Dos Passos shows how effective propaganda similarly depends not only on institutional regulation of particular information but also on the semantic deregulation of language. His solution to the problem, however, is not positivist language stripped of potential polysemy, but more irony. While narrating what happened when Bourne dared to oppose the war publicly, Dos Passos formally enacts the semantic shifts that would prove to be so effective at mobilizing and manipulating public opinion:

in the crazy spring of 1917 he began to get unpopular where his bread was
buttered at the New Republic;
for New Freedom read Conscription, for Democracy, Win the War, for Reform, Safeguard the Morgan Loans for Progress Civilization Education Service
Buy a Liberty Bond,
Straff the Hun,
Jail the Objectors. (449)

The explicit substitution of slogans is first indicated by italics and punctuation: "for New Freedom read Conscription, for Democracy, Win / the War," and the enjambment begins to meld apposite words. Terms are offset in italics and by the line break, and the disappearance of the verb "read" intensifies both the visual and semantic effect: while reading is commanded by the imperative, it is the disappearance of precisely that word—"read"—that haunts the subsequent litany of propaganda. This passage is more than familiar modernist literary fragmentation reflecting social and psychological fragmentation: after the removal of visual semantic mark-

ers and the simultaneous persistence of the semantic substitutions, what remains is critique almost passing as reportage, an ironic novelistic mode calling attention to itself via the imperative mood. The ironic coup de grace occurs when Dos Passos suggests how public consensus about the war was formed by "educating" citizens via propaganda masquerading as fact. Continually reminding his readers how susceptible public opinion actually was to the manipulation of language, he reveals the notion of a rationally formed and informed public opinion not just as hopelessly naive but as actively harmful: a disposition toward the world of ideas that would invariably favor the interests of those who control the means of information production.

Reflecting in his memoir about the Committee on Public Information, Creel writes: "In all things, from first to last, without halt or change, it was a plain publicity proposition, a vast enterprise in salesmanship, the world's greatest adventure in advertising" (4). Meanwhile, both the official Creel Report and other sections of Creel's memoir maintain that the task was simply one of transmitting data to a rationally capable public, who could be trusted to arrive at the same conclusion that President Wilson had: "Our effort was educational and informative throughout," Creel wrote, "for we had such confidence in our case as to feel that no other argument was needed than the simple, straightforward presentation of facts" (5). Despite such blithe protestations, the Creel Committee plainly realized what Alexander Hamilton had not anticipated: that the creation of a public "war will" would occur not through the enlightened processing of transparently factual information but rather by rendering information via the emergent techniques of advertising and public relations. Furthermore, the committee realized that their goal was not only immediate victory in World War I but also the formation of a public consciousness favorably disposed toward unrestrained corporate interests. In their own suggestively metaphorical characterization, written in the 1918 report to the National Association of Manufacturers and included as an appendix to the US Senate's La Follette committee report, the "public educational movements" that inculcated patriotic fervor in citizens would first help win the military conflict in Europe and then had the "secondary purpose of arming American industry for the trade conflict to follow the conclusion of the war" (US Senate 228).

Even before meeting Ivy Lee—one of the founders of the field of Public relations—when they were staying at the same hotel in Moscow

in 1928, Dos Passos was well aware of such developments. In *The Big Money*, the field of public relations is represented by J. Ward Moorehouse, whom one character describes as having "done more than any one living man, whether you like what he does or not, to form the public mind in this country" (1199). Moorehouse, modeled rather pointedly after Ivy Lee himself, rises from proletarian newspaper reporter to wealthy confidante of presidents and corporate barons. He starts his career by resolving conflicts between labor and industry by

keeping the public informed about the state of relations between capital and labor and stemming the propaganda of sentimentalists and reformers, upholding American ideas against crazy German socialist ideas and the panaceas of discontented dirtfarmers in the Northwest. (253)

Moorehouse accomplishes this task not only by publicizing the putatively common interests of both sides but also by inventing new ways of rendering mundane commodities more desirable to consumers through a combination of creative brainstorming and research into the published work about public relations. Moorehouse "read Crowds, Jr. and various books on psychology, tried to imagine himself a hardware merchant or the executive of Hammacher Schlemmer or some other big hardware house, and puzzled over what kind of literature from a factory would be appealing to him" (219); he then "draft[ed] the literature to be sent out" (233). When the war breaks out, Moorehouse offers his services to the fictional equivalent of the Creel Committee, and working under their auspices, the principles of his advertising business remain the same. When advertising the Wilson administration, however, the products aren't just hardware, real estate, or the vision of corporate America as a benevolent creator of prosperity and liberty; they're also loyalty, conformity, patriotism, and enthusiasm for American entry into World War I. Late in the novel Moorehouse makes his point plainly while describing his product to the allegorically named US Senator Planet, with whom he is engaged in business: "The force of public opinion, Senator, . . . That is what we have to offer" (1195). That Dos Passos characterizes Moorehouse's products specifically as "literature" emphasizes a punning deictic toward the political aspirations of his own novelistic project: the creation of a public opinion that is trained and attuned to recognizing paradox and irony, and which may thus read corporate and novelistic "literature" with a critical eye that inculcates resistant skepticism rather than tractable credulity.8

Throughout the trilogy, Dos Passos repeatedly returns to this task by focusing on the role of representation, information, and the public. In 1919, for instance, J. Ward Moorehouse's companion Eveline Hutchins is dining with Moorehouse and Mr. Rasmussen, an engineer with Standard Oil who keeps "talking about Baku and Mohammarah and Mosul, how the Anglo-Persian and the Royal Dutch were getting ahead of the U.S. in the near East" (616). While colonial and corporate interests are carving the region into Iran, Iraq, and other countries, Moorehouse is concerned that "We stand to lose our primacy in world oil production"; the only hope for establishing US colonial interests where British colonial interests are preparing to be established, as Moorehouse sees it, lies in the prospect that "public opinion can be aroused."

When Rasmussen angrily remarks that "if [Woodrow] Wilson now was going to let the British bulldoze him into giving them the world's future supply of oil when we'd won the war for them, he was through," Hutchins responds with a remedy that echoes the supposedly rational language of both the Creel Committee and the public relations industry: "But can't you do something about it, can't you put your ideas before the public, Mr. Rasmussen?" (617). As the novel has repeatedly demonstrated up to this point, a unified media campaign distributing aesthetically effective information is just the strategic ticket. Yet Rasmussen's response reveals a key shift in the understanding of what is meant by public relations in the postwar period:

That's Moorehouse's job not mine, and there isn't any public since the war. The public'll damn well do what it's told; and besides like God Almighty it's far away. . . . What we've got to do is make a few key men understand the situation. Moorehouse is the key to the key men. (617)⁹

The fact that Rasmussen simultaneously denies the existence of the public and asserts that it will "do what it's told" suggests an ironically doubled definition of "public." First, he means the conglomeration of citizens whose concerns as individuals are roughly congruent with the concerns of industry: a group that does exist (at least enough to be told what to do). This is a consuming public that needs only positive "facts" in order to be guided to the same conclusions as government and industry. Decond, and more important, the "public" that Rasmussen identifies as having disappeared since the war designates a pluralist collectivity capable of making

choices that might be at odds with the desires of industry and capital; a public capable of recognizing the difference between the rhetoric and the actuality of multinational industry and capital.

Rasmussen's definition of two different publics agrees both with industry's and with that of two seminal theoreticians in the 1920s, Walter Lippmann and John Dewey, who famously conceptualized a public that disappeared because the

creation of political unity has also promoted social and intellectual uniformity, a standardization favorable to mediocrity. Opinion has been regimented as well as outward behavior. ... Mass production is not confined to the factory. (Dewey 116)

Dewey here both reinforces and revises a widespread conception of ideology: that it first may seem to emanate purely from an economic base, but may also be affected by the means of cultural production not limited to a base-superstructure model. The key characteristic shared by both kinds of public is its uniform reception of information and the uniformity of its response to that information.

John Dewey vs. Walter Lippmann

The full import of Dos Passos's engagement with journalism and the public emerges when we consider his novel in the context of the defining statement on the subject: the 1920s exchange between Dewey and Lippmann, which offered both institutional and aesthetic solutions to the problem of a public decreasingly capable of engaging in politics.

On the institutional hand, erstwhile radical journalist Walter Lippmann published three books that directly addressed a crisis in democracy: Liberty and the News (1920), Public Opinion (1922), and The Phantom Public (1925). Pleading for a positivist, objective journalism that would return the country to the wise hands of rational political agents, Lippmann asserted in Liberty and the News that "Liberty is not so much permission as it is the construction of a system of information increasingly independent of opinion" (96–97). The ideal newspaper and newsreel would transmit facts to a discriminating public, Lippmann argued, and the failure of both media to do so had profound political implications:

Now, men who have lost their grip upon the relevant facts of their environment are the inevitable victims of agitation and

propaganda. The quack, the charlatan, the jingo, and the terrorist, can flourish only where the audience is deprived of independent access to information. . . . The whole reference of thought comes to be what somebody asserts, not what actually is. (55)

If a situation wherein thought refers merely to language qualifies as a political ill, Lippmann's proposed remedy was an independent, global news organization staffed by expert readers, writers, and observers: a sort of nonprofit, transnational, positivist news organization that would ensure that unbiased information was impartially and globally distributed. This is precisely the sort of classically liberal, institutional remedy for political-structural defects in which Dos Passos had little faith; he makes it abundantly clear that even if information could ever be transmitted and distributed with positivist transparency, media magnates like William Randolph Hearst—subject of the scornful *U.S.A.* biography "Poor Little Rich Boy"—would do everything in their power to prevent or distort the transmission of such data, and that the struggle for political change would simply be deferred to a different theater.

Dos Passos's take on the crisis of information was closer to that of Dewey, who replied directly to Lippmann in *The Public and Its Problems* (1927). ¹¹ Essentially agreeing with Lippmann at first, Dewey wrote:

The smoothest road to control of political conduct is by control of opinion. As long as interests of pecuniary profit are powerful, and a public has not located and identified itself, those who have this interest will have an unresisted motive for tampering with the springs of political action in all that affects them. (182)

Yet he shared none of Lippmann's faith in an unproblematically transmissible fact. Whereas Lippmann's "facts" would fight "the terrorist," Dewey responded that one should "realize the distance which may lie between 'facts' and the meaning of facts," for even though "Many persons seem to suppose that facts carry their meaning along with themselves on their face . . . the power of physical facts to coerce belief does not reside in the bare phenomena" (3). Dewey thus found his solution to "the problem of the public" precisely where Lippmann found the source of the problem: the aesthetic free play of represented data.

Contra Lippmann, the pragmatist Dewey proposed that "Only when the facts are allowed free play for the suggestion of new points of view is any significant conversion of conviction as to meaning possible" (3).

Where Lippmann held that a team of positivist technocrats could provide the informational means to both inform and control an incorrigible audience, Dewey suggested that art might play a crucial role in first forming, then informing, publics. Because a reformed vision of the world was necessary for information adequately to be processed, Dewey argued that the

freeing of the artist in literary presentation . . . is as much a precondition of the desirable creation of adequate opinion on public matters as is the freeing of social inquiry, [for] Poetry, the drama, the novel, are proofs that the problem of presentation is not insoluble. Artists have always been the real purveyors of news, for it is not the outward happening in itself which is new, but the kindling of it by emotion, perception and appreciation. (184)

To distinguish provisionally between Dewey's and Lippmann's arguments is not to obscure the fundamental similarities they shared. Like Dewey, Lippmann asserts in *The Phantom Public* that public-political processes are essentially processes of symbolic manipulation, and that political manipulation of signs is a fundamentally "aesthetic" activity that produces bodily feeling:

The making of one general will out of a multitude of general wishes is not an Hegelian mystery . . . but an art well known to leaders, politicians, and steering committees. It consists essentially in the use of symbols which assemble emotions after they have been detached from their ideas. . . . The process, therefore, by which general opinions are brought to cooperation consists of an intensification of feeling and a degradation of significance. (48)

Whereas for Rousseau the task of the legislator is to ascertain and enact the general will (to the extent that Rousseau conceived of the general will as a practical proposition), Lippmann shifts the discussion to understand how something as amorphous as the general will can be ascertained, but only after it has been constructed. That process of construction is equally a process of recognition and instruction, and aesthetic symbols are the pedagogical means by which the will of the people is formed. As Michael Warner has more recently argued in his formulation of oppositional "counterpublics," "the perception of public discourse as conversation

obscures the importance of the poetic functions of both language and corporeal expressivity in giving a particular shape to publics" (115). In U.S.A. we find a counterpublicizing Dos Passos instructing readers in the art of recognizing, and thus shaping, a symbolic order at the heart of any public, the self-conscious formation of which might be called irony.

In a novelistic contribution to such emerging conceptions of the public, Dos Passos's aesthetic-political task is not simply to inform people that the media is corrupt or that this corruption is directly related to an increasingly corrupt democracy: it is to suggest that simply knowing that the media is corrupt provides little protection against its influence. In one telling instance in *The 42nd Parallel*, the Merchant Marine Joe Williams knows that his sister Janey "works for J. Ward Moorehouse, the public relations counsel, you know . . . he does propaganda for the Morgans and the Rockefellers. . . . He runs pro-war stuff through a feature syndicate. And they call this a free country" (354). Nevertheless, Williams later succumbs to the putative opportunities for individual and national success recommended by the papers, knowing full well that the papers are controlled by the same propaganda machine that employs his sister. He tells a friend,

if you believed the papers the heinies were getting licked, and it was a big opportunity for a young guy if you didn't get in wrong by being taken for a proGerman or a bolshevik or some goddamn thing. After all as Janey kept writing civilization had to be saved and it was up to us to do it. (560)

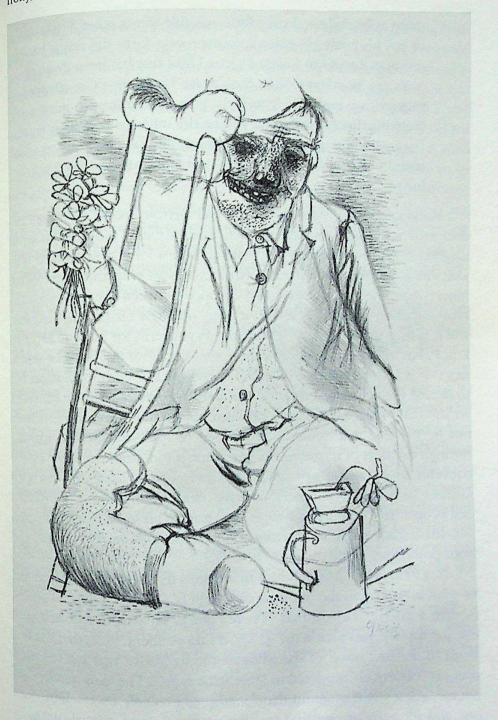
The irony here functions at several levels. First, of course, Dos Passos presents a comic pun: if one believes the propaganda of the newspapers, then one not only believes that the Germans (heinies) are being defeated (licked) but one also becomes a sycophant who has licked the heinies of moneyed interests. Then, in the next sentence, we learn that "Joe started a savings account and bought him a liberty bond," and Joe's supposed decision to help "save civilization" is revealed as precisely the act scripted by public relations 13 pages earlier, where Moorehouse has stipulated that government "publicity ought to have two aims, to stimulate giving among the folks back home and to keep people informed of the progress of the work" (547). The scene doesn't so much characterize Joe as an egregious sap as imply how particular forms of information herd readers toward particular forms of action: whether or not one has privileged access to

contradictory information, one still reads a newspaper and still purchases a war bond. And this is precisely why, the novel suggests, one must learn to read anew.

Seeing and acting, irony and visuality

Dos Passos forcefully echoes Dewey's belief that the "level of action fixed by embodied intelligence is always the important thing" (Dewey, Public and Its Problems 210), and has long been understood as a "satiric moralist" (Pizer 185) in the classical sense: one who painfully punishes the follies and rectifies the vices of a miscreant society. Yet Dos Passos's own statement on satire's aesthetic effects on bodies has been largely ignored.¹⁴ In "Satire as a Way of Seeing," a 1937 preface to a book of drawings by George Grosz, Dos Passos puzzles over the relationships among radical politics, emotional empathy, and modes of literary and visual representation. Indeed, he goes so far as to identify a wholesale cultural shift in the hermeneutic habits of Americans based on the interplay of word and image. His parents' generation, visually trained by the conventions of realist Victorian painting and drawing, when "enjoying a view from a hill, say, were stimulated verbally, remembering a line of verse or a passage from Sir Walter Scott, before they got any real impulse from the optic nerve" (21). With the rise of film technology and evolution of nonrealist styles of painting, however, "In the last fifty years a change has come over the visual habits of Americans as a group. . . . From being a wordminded people we are becoming an eyeminded people." Central to this piece, as in the earlier "Wanted: An Ivy Lee for Liberals," is the sense that the diagnosis of a diseased body politic must occur at the intersection of language and visuality, and that a literary treatment must emerge from the directed irony of an allopathic satire: "The satirist in words or visual images is like the surgeon who comes with his sharp and sterile instrument to lance some focus of dead matter" ("Satire" 31-32). Like the novel, the essay suggests that genuinely political aesthetics would have to inspire not only cognitive or informational interest (the interest of new facts) but emotional experience, especially pain. Crucially, Dos Passos identifies the capability to inspire just this sort of pain as the particular talent of the satirist:

A satirist is a man whose flesh creeps so at the ugly and the savage and the incongruous aspects of society that he has to express



The Hero. Lithograph by George Grosz, 1933. From the portfolio The American Scene, no. 1:A Comment upon American Life by America's Leading Artists. ¹⁵ Reproduced by permission of the University of Michigan Museum of Art. Museum purchase 1935.20.

them as brutally and nakedly as possible to get relief. He seeks to put his grisly obsession into expressive form the way a bacteriologist seeks to isolate a virus. Until that has been done no steps can be taken to cure the disease. Looking at Grosz's drawings you are more likely to feel a grin of pain than to burst out laughing. Instead of letting you be the superior bystander laughing in an Olympian way at somebody absurd, Grosz makes you identify yourself with the sordid and pitiful object. His satire hurts. (30)

Rather than the Verfremdungseffekt that Bertolt Brecht advocated as a means of preventing empathic audiences, Dos Passos proposes an art of diagnostic empathy where irony helps achieve a kind of embodied realism: that is, an ironic hyperrealism that evokes an empathic sense of the object's pain even as it insists on a distance between the object and its representation. It is this distance that irony uniquely effects and describes, and it is this "militant irony" (Northrop Frye's term for satire [223]) that Dos Passos imagines can create a space for alternative politics. The novelist's task is not to construct objective correlatives to emotional states but to deploy the distortions of irony in order to represent a distorted world. At the same time, the distance between object and representation must not be the sort that could be reconciled or resolved without moving through the field of meaning, the space that is too often occluded by the conventions of realism or naturalism. The fact that Dos Passos starts his critique by noting how Americans have transmogrified from "wordminded people" to "eyeminded people" is crucial to his sense that both verbal and visual irony might be representational tonics for an ill democracy, and both powerfully shape the prose of U.S.A.

In 1919, when Moorehouse first begins to develop the techniques of what he later calls the "modern campaign of scientific publicity" (625), he tells a potential client that "There's got to be a word to catch your eye the minute you pick it up" (177). It's no accident, then, that the first word in the first novel of the trilogy—the word that first catches one's eye—is "Newsreel" rendered in large italic type. ¹⁶ The film newsreel, of course, was a visual medium that functioned precisely by catching one's eye, and it's unsurprising that the film newsreel was a crucial means by which World War I was sold to a skeptical American audience. ¹⁷ As The Creel Report noted, "the three great agencies of appeal in the fight for

public opinion were: The Written Word, the Spoken Word, and the Motion Picture" (47). Though they are all rendered in prose, the Newsreel sections of the novel represent precisely the three forms of communication that were employed to sell both Model T Fords and expansionist war. Because the headlines come from actual newspapers and refer to actual events, and the song lyrics are those of actual songs, Dos Passos's novelistic Newsreels aren't well described by contemporary or subsequent New Critical accounts of irony: their referents are too plainly material to be adequately accounted for by the putatively disinterested world of poetic irony. Nonetheless, in their fragmentation at the levels of sentence, line, and page, the Newsreel sections don't attempt the sort of first-person, "humanized" account of events that distinguishes the Left reportage of writers such as John Reed or Meridel Le Sueur (or, for that matter, the Camera Eye sections of U.S.A. itself).

In the U.S.A. biography of John Reed, for instance, Dos Passos says three times of the author of *Ten Days That Shook the World* that "Reed was a westerner and words meant what they said" (373, 375). But it is both the ideal journalistic and the ideal social-realist conceptions of language—the language of reportage, wherein words more or less mean what they say—that the Newsreels reveal as increasingly problematic. The Newsreels, after all, don't even pretend to mean what they say, but rather might be said to force readers to see what they mean. Understood as a response to the success of "informational campaigns" during and after the war, the Newsreel sections don't represent mental, social, or national states by reflecting cultural ephemera so that circumstances surrounding events are rendered accurately. Rather, they highlight the aesthetic and ideological presentation of putative facts that masquerade as news and thus call attention to how facts themselves always presume, occlude, and function within a theory of meaning.

Consider, for instance, the first words of 1919 (after the table of contents), "Newsreel XX." Like the other Newsreels, this one mixes newspaper headlines, song lyrics, and copy from news stories. Here is the first half:

Oh the infantree the infantree With the dirt behind their ears

ARMIES CLASH AT VERDUN IN GLOBE'S GREATEST BATTLE

150,000 MEN AND WOMEN PARADE

but another question and a very important one is raised. The New York Stock Exchange is today the only free securities market in the world. If it maintains that position it is sure to become perhaps the world's greatest center for the marketing of

BRITISH FLEET SENT TO SEIZE GOLDEN HORN

The cavalree artilleree
And the goddamned engineers
Will never beat the infantree
In eleven thousand years

TURKS FLEE BEFORE TOMMIES AT GALLIPOLI

when they return home what will our war veterans think of the American who babbles about some vague new order, while dabbling in the sand of shoal water? From this weak folly they who have lived through the spectacle will recall the vast new No Man's Land of Europe reeking with murder and the lust of rapine, aflame with the fires of revolution. (363)

What begins as a simple, italicized soldiers' parody of a popular patriotic song moves immediately into what would seem to be a relatively objective statement of fact: the battle of Verdun was, after all, indisputably one of the largest and most devastating battles that the world had ever seen. Yet the smaller type of the following line and the even smaller text of the newspaper story about the free securities market begin to suggest that the reader is also a viewer, that information isn't so much neutrally transmitted as aesthetically performed. Indeed, the first snippet of news copy and the second large headline can hardly be said to exist in mere juxtaposition. The seemingly incomplete assertion that the NYSE is "sure to become perhaps the world's greatest center for the marketing of" quite neatly becomes part of a complete sentence, which hypotactically indicates precisely what the stock exchange's public relations branches would be marketing: the imperial aspirations of both the US and the "BRITISH"

FLEET SENT TO SEIZE GOLDEN HORN" of the Middle East. As the sentence is completed, the word "free" is retrospectively ironized as well, implying that Wilson's "New Freedom" refers to the violently enforced freedom of markets rather than peoples.

The fine line between irony and a lie emerges from the final headline, the falseness of which can be recognized only in relation to extratextual knowledge that the British were in fact defeated at Gallipoli. Although this was more commonly known to American readers in 1938 than today, we can distinguish the kind of historical knowledge required to recognize the progression from true statement (armies fight at Verdun) to false statement (Turks flee at Gallipoli). By contrast, the purely formal, aesthetic distinction between the facts is immediately recognizable. The different typefaces emphasize that individual lines are to be read not only in juxtaposition but as complete semantic units in their own signifying right: this formal figuration drives home the extent to which reading Dos Passos's novel is a specifically visual activity, and the specifically visual component of the novel foregrounds the degree to which facts are by no means transparently transmissible, whether on film or on paper.

Teaching us how to read newspaper headlines that appear in a novel next to song lyrics that themselves are parodies, Dos Passos places the reader in the ironic position of student for his particular brand of political/aesthetic education. To understand the Newsreels this way is to recognize the significance of the remark uttered by Mac's guide in revolutionary Mexico: "They sing about the murder of Madero. . . . It is very good for the education of the people . . . you see they cannot read the papers so they get their news in songs" (115). The readers of U.S.A. also get their news in songs, but the news is that newspapers and newsreels under the control of corporate and state interests are only serving up a parody of facts.

That ostensible facts always presume (even if they occlude) a theory of meaning is hardly a new suggestion, of course, insofar as it might describe Nietzschean (and pragmatist) aesthetics in shorthand. If it flies in the face of a series of conventional understandings of what it means for a novel to be political, especially when the politics at stake are conceived in the scientific terms of those Marxists who decried the novels and the politics of John Dos Passos, he surely submits his novel as an aesthetic corrective to the diseased realm of cultural hermeneutics by refiguring "politics" through the "political." Political theorist Dick Howard describes

the difference between politics and the political as central to questions of aesthetic praxis:

The philosopher insists on the difference between the condition and that which it conditions—on the difference between the political and politics. This is not to deny that politics is about "who does what to whom," as Lenin famously put it. It implies that the dimension of meaning must be introduced in order to explain the dynamism that makes the "facts" appear to call for action—for politics. (5)

By amending Howard's sentence to read "the philosopher and the novelist," the most ironic literary production can be considered as an active engagement with politics insofar as it affects the interpretive conditions (the political) for praxis (politics). In *U.S.A.*, the ironic presentation of news highlights precisely the dimension of meaning that had proved so influential in dictating the parameters of public action and inaction.

Conclusion: Novel news

Dos Passos understood that it is precisely when language is the object of contemplation that politics looks less like an exercise in empirical research, grassroots organizing, or legislative reasoning and more like an exercise in literary production and evaluation. Although Dos Passos arrived at a public position closer to Dewey's than to Lippmann's, *U.S.A.* might profitably be read as a revision and artistic translation of both Dewey's and Lippmann's dialectic about the need for new engines of public opinion. When the press is understood to constitute and direct the actions of a public that it is meant to inform, Schwartz's and Sartre's analogy between newspapers and Dos Passos's novel finally assumes a politically "pressing" significance: the possibility that the crucial gaps left by a failed press might be filled by the novel.

Lippmann and Dewey agree that "the problem at the present time [is] that of securing experts to manage administrative matters" (Dewey 123). For his part, Dos Passos certainly indicates a need for expertise in the political management of informational affairs; this was ever more urgently the case when individuals and crowds were faced with rapidly evolving technology that manipulated corporeal responses to signifying phenom-

ena. Yet unlike Dewey, Lippmann, Habermas's referee in the sphere of communicative rationality, or Richard Rorty's liberal ironist, Dos Passos conceived of his role as removed from the day-to-day management of informational affairs. His role was to contribute to the aesthetic education of the populace and then absent himself from the role of political manager. In this view, it is individuals and collectivities themselves—and not the consolidated, institutional power of magnates and managers—who become expert in the recognition and subsequent management of political affairs. Irony in *U.S.A.* functions to make salient a parabasis wherein, if the author is conceived as speaking directly through the narrative, the reader is also forced to hold such a conversation with author, novel, and other information systems.

One thus suspects that Dos Passos's novel is politically controversial at least in part because its politics—roughly and revisionally anarchist fall outside the discursive bounds delineated by communism, liberalism, republicanism, and progressivism. U.S.A. redefines the object of politics itself as the indirect distribution of aesthetic information: information that calls attention to its own means of aesthetic production and oscillates between attempts to produce a naturalist-aesthetic, emotional response to cruel injustice on the one hand and, on the other, an ironic awareness of how those effects are produced. In Camera Eye 46 Dos Passos famously relates how he goes home and reads Martial's epigrams to "ponder the course of history and what leverage might pry the owners loose from power and bring back (I too Walt Whitman) our storybook democracy" (895). If Dos Passos admits that, like Whitman, he too is attempting to sing America, we should perhaps take him at his word and understand his novel as a literal "storybook democracy": not the jingoistic fairy-tale fantasies sold to schoolchildren but rather a storybook that attempts to aesthetically instantiate a new democratic order. Early in The 42nd Parallel a young Moorehouse gives a real-estate pamphlet—what he calls his promotional literature—to a potential client:"I thought maybe you might like to glance at it as ... as something a bit novel in the advertising line" (177). By the end of The Big Money readers have indeed been consuming something "novel in the advertising line": a novel called U.S.A., which advertises a radically new version of the USA.

Notes

- 1. Although Dos Passos always conceived of the trilogy as a single work—and he edited the individual volumes before issuing *U.S.A.*—the novels were first published as he finished them: *The 42nd Parallel* in 1930, 1919 in 1932, and *The Big Money* in 1936. John Rohrkemper counts 31 essays and reviews about Dos Passos published in 1938, though he does not include Sartre's 1938 essay, which was not published in English until 1957 (44–49).
- 2. Tracing the ancient association of irony with antipolitical resignation is obviously beyond the scope of this essay, but my argument must be understood as a riposte to this tradition as it appears in American literary culture. As Alfred Kazin wrote in 1942, the "the greatest creative irony the reportorial mind of the thirties could establish" was "a picture of Negro farmers wandering on the road, eating their bread under a billboard poster furnished by the National Association of Manufacturers—'America Enjoys the Highest Standard of Living in the World'" (497). In 1961, John Wrenn sadly asserted that "Dos Passos wrote about war with a sense of irony," and thus "if any message was intended for the reader, it was futility of action—the more violent, the more futile" and "the only attitude to take toward life as toward death was resignation, acceptance, stoicism" (114). Thomas Strychacz is a notable exception among critics of Dos Passos when he frames the novel in terms of the profession of public relations, noting the "radical instability in the trilogy's ironic meanings" (141).
- 3. Charles Altieri has recently described this interpretive encounter as "generous irony," which reveals "how engaging aesthetic aspects of our affective lives can bring us a potentially richer account of the values governing these lives than we find in more epistemically oriented analyses" (230).
- 4. Lennard Davis traces the intimately related history of novels and the news and shows how a hierarchy of informational value was established several centuries before Dos Passos:

The ideologizing of language . . . created the conditions for legal intervention into the realm of the discourse to diffuse the politicizing of news/novels, which then created the conditions for a definition of fact and fiction in which the former could be repressed and the latter more or less ignored. (83)

5. American literature was a key component of the government's efforts: the Creel Report notes that the US distributed 94,848 copies of *The Battle Line of Democracy: Prose and Poetry of the World War* throughout the nation in 1917 alone (455). This tactic must have depressed radical champions of Walt Whit-

man, whose "Long, Too Long, America" and "Beat! Beat! Drums!" were included in the volume.

6. See Landsberg 161-163 and 210-211.

7.As Noam Chomsky points out, the concept of public opinion had been understood to precede and legitimate overt force long before Dos Passos, Dewey, and the Creel Committee. Chomsky quotes David Hume's First Principles of Government:

When we enquire by what means this wonder is brought about, we shall find, that as Force is always on the side of the governed, the governors have nothing to support them but opinion. 'Tis therefore, on opinion only that government is founded; and this maxim extends to the most despotic and most military governments, as well as to the most free and most popular. (xii)

8. For a discussion of rhetorical politics in the 1930s see Solomon, especially 806-814.

9. Anticipating Michel Foucault, Dos Passos suggests here that genuine power increasingly resides in quasi- or extra-institutional—albeit increasingly pervasive—structures that are defiantly and self-consciously beyond the control not only of individual political agents but even of the most organized collectivity. As such, power seems to exist outside the mandate of anything resembling either popular sovereignty or the wise, rational modulation of a synecdochal representative.

10. The National Association of Manufacturers proposed that

the public—which in the industrial sense of the word comprises employer, employes [sic] and the consumer—is capable of understanding the folly of curbing and crippling industrial enterprise, and that the dissemination of truthful information on this score will result in the substitution of harmony for discord. (US Senate 228)

11. Dewey gave generally favorable (albeit mixed) reviews to both *The Phantom Public* and *Public Opinion* ("Practical Democracy"; rev. of *Public Opinion*). He also acknowledged in a footnote his debt to Lippmann for the idea that "the Public seems to be lost; it is certainly bewildered":

See Walter Lippmann's "The Phantom Public." To this as well as to his "Public Opinion," I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness, not only as to this particular point, but for ideas involved in my entire discussion even when it reaches conclusions diverging from his. (Public 116n1)

As Dewey wrote in 1922,

Doubtless the régime of propaganda brought on by the war has had much to do with forcing upon us recognition of the dominant role in social control of material put in circulation by the press. The bulk and the careful organization of propaganda are testimony to two outstanding facts: the new necessity governments are under of enlisting popular interest and sentiment; and the possibility of exciting and directing that interest by a judiciously selected supply of "news."

("Education as Politics" 331)

12. Dewey would agree with Lippmann that agreeing on a common sign system is roughly equivalent to forming a metaphorical general will. As Mark Garrett Cooper suggests, Lippmann and Dewey also agreed that previous theorists of liberal democracy had failed to note just how central the construction of signs was to the definition of social and public spheres, and that this was a failure of mistaking figurative signs for literal ones. Cooper writes that "Unlike Lippmann . . . Dewey strongly distinguished between symbols that enable a community to think itself (true public communication) and those that merely create social cohesion (and by implication serve private interests)" (99). He further notes that

Lippmann and Dewey banished the possibility that a non-ideological publicity might emerge within existing forms. Along with it, they dismissed any notion that a group could govern itself absent self-conscious manipulation of the signs that define it. (104)

13. It is worth noting that the always credulous Janey, who quits her first job only because she's convinced that her Jewish employers are German sympathizers, is also an avid reader of Victorian novels and identifies with the characters in a way that Dos Passos scrupulously tries to prevent:

When she read she used to imagine she was the heroine, that the weak brother who went to the bad but was a gentleman at core and capable of every sacrifice, like Sidney Carton in *A Tale of Two Cities* was Joe and that the hero was Alec. (126)

14. Michael North's recent Camera Works is an excellent and notable exception. He writes,

If the social problem that *U.S.A.* is supposed to confront is not just class division but also the fragmentation of the public into a mass of individualized spectators, then how could the form of the trilogy itself be read except as another symptom or a collection of symptoms? If

modernism itself is so thoroughly implicated in the bemusement of the public, then how would it have been any different if the partially autobiographical Savage had gone on to write *U.S.A.* instead of enlisting in Moorhouse's advertising army? Is the form of *U.S.A.* perhaps a form of despair, of acquiescence in the face of social facts, as leftwing critics have long claimed in the case of other modernist masterworks? (155)

Taking North's questions as rhetorical, I read the novel as actively engaging the aesthetic sensibilities of consumers with a sophisticated eye toward critically modifying those sensibilities.

15. This portfolio of scathing lithographs was produced in New York by the Contemporary Print Group, a collective that included José Clemente Orozco, William Gropper, and Thomas Hart Benton. Dos Passos wrote the introduction to *Interregnum*, Grosz's 1936 portfolio of antiauthoritarian sketches. For a discussion of prints as a specifically democratic medium, see Helen Langa.

16. The 1938 edition also featured a new two-page prologue titled "U.S.A.," which Dos Passos wrote for the occasion. Thus the first word that the reader actually sees is "U.S.A.," followed by a table of contents. The word "Newsreel" signals the start of the first installment.

17. For specifically filmic readings of Dos Passos's literary aesthetics, see Justin Edwards and Stephen Hock.

18. E. L. Doctorow has a different view: "the circumstances themselves are occasionally flashed to us by means of the so-called 'Newsreels' that interrupt the text" (ix).

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John Ashbery's Elizabeth Bishop

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ohn Ashbery's poetry is conversational. While his pronouns are notoriously slippery, readers learn to expect a "you" to be addressed even in the most unexpected places, so it is safe when reading an Ashbery poem to anticipate some response from an interlocutor, whether explicitly quoted or only implied by the speaker's counterresponse. The proposing and disposing of ideas, images, feelings, and attitudes that constitute the shape of many Ashbery poems relies on the sense of an auditor who must be courted, cajoled, defended against, second-guessed, and so on. Lyric address and dialogue are conventions of the genre, but what distinguishes an Ashberyan lyric from one shaped by first-person reflection is its capacity to be interrupted from the outside: the lyric condition in which Ashbery's speakers characteristically find themselves is often a volatile terrain of psychic conflict where unnamed and usually unheard interlocutors apparently call the speaker to account for something said or not said, done or not done. His speakers are repeatedly provoked to moral justification or judgment, strategies of moral accounting that border on special pleading, ranging from defensiveness and justification to appeals for forgiveness. The basic poses are those of the Christian sinner before his or her Lord, and at times Ashbery's speakers seem like tragicomic exaggerations of George Herbert's; speakers who might claim mastery of their meditation in lyric posture are open to parody or other comic devices.

Yet the failure of moral justification also entails for Ashbery's speakers a vulnerability that occasions some of the most intimate moments in his work. This again is like Herbert, though in Ashbery's case the distinction between humility and humiliation is blurry at best. The momentary crises that emerge from these situations are never resolved through lyric or narrative means; the speaker never achieves a higher level of self-knowledge

or anticipation of redemption. While his conscience may ease up on him briefly, the speaker is usually aware that although "the formulas that have come to us so many times / in the past . . . have an end," it is always "a potentially hazardous one" (Flow 216). The intimacy of these moments is not simply one of lyric self-disclosure, however; it is rather that the lyric speaker discloses his proximity to an other self, to an intimate presence who is not necessarily a lover, who may not even be addressed, but in whom the speaker finds attachment in a shared wound or loss. 1

While such an other in Ashbery's work never has a proper name even though his poems are riddled with citations and the voices of others—the occasions of such intimacy often evoke the work of Elizabeth Bishop. Perhaps no other poet, except Hölderlin or John Clare, so persistently appears in Ashbery's work in such a way that one could ask, to inflect the line from Bishop's "Poem," "Which is which?" (CP 177). Indeed, Bishop's presence in certain poems of Ashbery's, particularly in "Ode to Bill" from Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror (1975), the long poem Flow Chart (1991), and several poems in Your Name Here (2000), not only provides some sense of how Ashbery reads her but also suggests a form of identification in his work with the affective contours of hers, particularly its concern not only with solitude, abandonment, and loss, but also with a debilitating shame, which provokes moral self-persecution.² These moments in Ashbery's work suggest that in spite of the critical consensus that Ashbery's pronominal others can never have a fixed identity, there are occasions when the particularity or singularity of the other matters: the intimate presence evoked by the poems is implicitly named Bishop, which, especially in Flow Chart, is the name of a presence both sheltering and in need of sheltering.3

The recurrence of echoes of Bishop over the 25-year span of the poems I will discuss argues for a unique relationship between her work and Ashbery's. ⁴ Just as Bishop's monument in her poem of that name "can shelter / what is within" (*CP* 25), so Ashbery incorporates Bishop within his work, including the monumental *Flow Chart*, as a reciprocating object of care. ⁵ The intimacy of this relationship is most apparent in "Ode to Bill," which explicitly lifts words and phrases from Bishop's "Poem" (first published in *The New Yorker* in 1972) and alludes to at least one other Bishop poem. "Ode to Bill" concerns the idea of writing:⁶

Well, in my case, it's getting down on paper

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Not thoughts, exactly, but ideas, maybe:
Ideas about thoughts. Thoughts is too grand a word.
Ideas is better, though not exactly what I mean.
Someday I'll explain. Not today though. (Self-Portrait 50)

Ashbery here borrows from Bishop the phrase she writes when, recognizing the Nova Scotia town of her childhood in a "little painting" by her great-uncle, she is startled by the strangeness that their "visions coincided" (CP 176). But, she reflects, "visions' is / too serious a word" for what they share, for it claims too much for what the poem insists has value in part for its littleness: the painting is "a sketch," and comes to embody "the little that we get for free" (177).

One irony of Ashbery's borrowing is that while his poem expresses scruples about the word "thoughts," the next two stanzas use the grander and more serious word "vision" three times, as if it has missed the point of its source text or is unaware of its borrowing. The word "vision" is applied to what Bishop's poem would probably consider a "look":

One horse stands out irregularly against
The land over there. And am I receiving
This vision? Is it mine, or do I already owe it
For other visions, unnoticed and unrecorded
On the great, relaxed curve of time,
All the forgotten springs, dropped pebbles,
Songs once heard that then passed out of light
Into everyday oblivion? (Self-Portrait 50–51)

The extended simile of the third stanza gives us some insight into the strange feeling of indebtedness the speaker feels for his "vision" and how this vision gives rise to this peculiarly Ashberyan lyric situation:

I feel as though someone had made me a vest
Which I was wearing out of doors into the countryside
Out of loyalty to the person, although
There is no one to see, except me
With my inner vision of what I look like. (50)

While Bishop's poem concerns the coinciding of two looks on the rural scene depicted in the painting, Ashbery's several gazes don't quite coincide: his speaker has a sense of the presence of an other, the person who

made the vest he wears. The maker of the vest parallels the great-uncle who painted the Nova Scotia scene, but that person, as the speaker knows and emphasizes, is absent, and he is alone: "There is no one to see, except me..." Yet it is the otherness of the person that enables the speaker's self-consciousness or self-awareness, what he calls "my inner vision of what I look like."

Ashbery's "loyalty to the person" who gave him the vest reflects what Bishop calls "our earthly trust," "the little that we get for free." "The wearing [of the vest] is both a duty and a pleasure" (50), the speaker says, perhaps, we might imagine, because it provides this "vision" of the self while at the same time fulfilling the sense of reciprocation or of discharging an obligation incurred by the gift. The intimate bond with the absent other also yields a vision of the self. The reason the speaker gives for the coincidence of duty and pleasure—"it absorbs me, absorbs me too much" (50)—suggests a self-consciousness that takes pleasure in being indebted and loyal to an other: the pleasure is inseparable from the duty, and the duty from the pleasure. The moment described in the third stanza is one of both heightened, solitary self-consciousness and absorption of the self in the gaze of an absent other. Yet the figure of absorption is at odds with a clear idea of "what I look like," if we take that to mean a relatively stable self-consciousness. The image is instead of a coincidence of duty and pleasure in which their difference is maintained: the duty to discharge a debt seems oddly aligned with the pleasure of being absorbed. To be absorbed commonly means to be deep in concentration or meditation to the point of self-forgetting or unself-consciousness. Though they may mean the same thing, there is a slight difference between saying "I am absorbed" and "it absorbs me"; while each implies the other, the latter suggests a passivity in which the self might be lost in the other. It is a difference that sounds threatening in Bishop's figure of water that is "Absorbing rather than being absorbed" in "The Bight" (CP 60).

The passivity of the speaker emerges particularly in the fourth stanza's uncertainty about whether or not this vision is even his. His "inner vision" seems to be interrupted by a horse "stand[ing] out irregularly against / The land over there," and another kind of self-consciousness takes over, one in which the sense of obligation surpasses the evidence of pleasure. There may be some anxiety in the feeling of indebtedness, that unspecified "other visions," presumably also pleasurable, "have passed out of light / Into everyday oblivion." Although the "curve of time" is "reLuke Carson

laxed," the speaker is momentarily troubled by these questions. Perhaps referring to the "inner vision" of himself in the third person, he permits time to take this vision away and resolves the trouble, the hint of anxiety, with the language of duty:

He moves away slowly,

Looks up and pumps the sky, a lingering

Question. Him too we can sacrifice

To the end progress, for we must, we must be moving on. (50)

Not only the imperative "must" but also the language of "sacrifice" draws out the moral meaning of "too much," the sense that there is an excessive pleasure in the absorption.

As the moral language of sacrifice is invoked in the context of a justification for letting someone move away on the "great, relaxed curve of time," one might wonder what has happened to the "loyalty to the person" that yielded the coincidence of duty and pleasure. The final lines are not simply moral but also echo a conventionally lyric attitude to the passing of time. But Ashbery discloses the moral reflex implicit in lyric acceptance: why, in fact, "must [we] be moving on"? This poem makes visible an intimacy between persons that is dangerously "too much," but at the same time it acknowledges the speaker's responsibility to be "loyal to the person," and the moral language that concludes the poem sounds suspiciously exhortatory as it commands us to let go of what can only impede "the end progress."

Ashbery's poem concludes not with memory but with a sense of all that has been lost, "unnoticed and unrecorded . . . All the forgotten springs, dropped pebbles, / Songs once heard that then passed out of light / Into everyday oblivion" (50–51). In contrast, Bishop's poem ends with a sense of the value of "our earthly trust" (CP 177) and a sense of "abidance" related to Ashbery's "loyalty to the person." But though Ashbery's "too much" contrasts with Bishop's sense that our earthly trust is "little," is "Not much," her poem ends up with more than Ashbery allows his speaker. While Ashbery's "vision" of the horse seems to interrupt the coincidence of pleasure and duty, Bishop's absorption in the rural scene both depicted in the painting and abiding in memory includes the "abidance" of the creatures:

the munching cows, the iris, crisp and shivering, the water

Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennai and eGangotri John Ashbery's Elizabeth Bishop

still standing from spring freshets, the yet-to-be-dismantled elms, the geese. (CP 177)

But the conclusion of "Ode to Bill," as an instance of "everyday oblivion," discourages us from calling the speaker Ashbery; the poem makes the speaker's loyalty evident in spite of his conventional lyric resignation to the "curve of time." In both leaning into and looking away from Bishop's "Poem," "Ode to Bill" suggests not simply a dangerous intimacy but an intimacy that is open to other responses, responses that are visible in other poems by Ashbery where, as I will try to show, a similar kind of intimacy is invoked.

One of the recurrent sources of Ashbery's ironic mode is the feeling that the intimate life is too trivial for lyric reflection. The frequent gestures of self-deprecation are particularly fitting in the epic-length Flow Chart, in which the speaker feels his self-reflection comes up short: "I wish I had something more sizable to say—/ couldn't my part be rewritten?" (38). But this feeling goes both ways: it is equally true to say that for Ashbery the intimate life is too important for mere poetry. "Syringa" is an ars poetica of the intimate life in this respect. While the speaker of "Ode to Bill" submits to the imperative to "be moving on" and accepts the need for sacrifice, in "Syringa" Orpheus counters a similar attitude by advising a diffident yet stubborn refusal to accept what the poem imagines to be the blithe forgetting to which normal mourning leads. Attempting after terrible grief both to practice and to recommend an acceptance of the passing of things (including Eurydice), Orpheus denies that what seem to be lyric regrets are regrets at all: they are, he says,

Merely a careful, scholarly setting down of
Unquestioned facts, a record of pebbles along the way.
And no matter how all this disappeared,
Or got where it was going, it is no longer
Material for a poem. Its subject
Matters too much, and not enough, standing there helplessly
While the poem streaked by, its tail afire . . . (Houseboat 71)

The experience of disappearance or loss, the "subject" of Orpheus's earlier music of mourning, is left "standing there helplessly" while the poem it occasions, "so turned inward / That the meaning, good or other, can never / become known" (71), pursues its autonomous course. Orpheus's sense of poetry's indifference to the intimate experience of loss does not,

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despite his calm tone, imply his reconciliation to the fact. Intimate experience and poetic form are violently at odds with each other, and words are an "evil burthen" that cannot make meaning of experience. While Orpheus will remain a poet in spite of this, he is also among those poets who at the last minute will leave the poem incomplete: he "at the last minute turns away" from the poem, repeating his earlier turning away from the light of the earth into the darkness of Hades to gaze on Eury-dice rather than on the work he is constructing "like a skyscraper." To leave the experience of loss "standing there helplessly" may be to leave it vulnerable and exposed, but it may be a better option than having it disappear, like Eurydice, into the darkness.

To side with intimate experience in its helplessness and yet to remain a poet requires maintaining both the singularity of experience and the generality of poetic form and meaning, a generality reflected in Orpheus's reduction of poems to "a record of pebbles along the way." Pebbles are interchangeable, and whatever commemorative value they have has no formal relation to the particular memory or event with which they are associated. The conclusion of "Syringa" captures how the original experience of singers like Orpheus is indirectly evoked by a poem: while "all record of these people and their lives / Has disappeared into libraries, onto microfilm" (71), they can reemerge in concealed form when "an arbitrary chorus"—of readers and writers and poems—

Speaks of a totally different incident with a similar name In whose tales are hidden syllables Of what happened so long before that In some small town, one indifferent summer.

Flow Chart (1991), written in the months after his mother's death (Shoptaw 302), is both Ashbery's longest and formally his most autobiographical poem. Though it has almost no autobiographical content, it tends to disperse occasions of potentially lyric reflection into the tones and styles of the autobiographical: it reliably reflects on, sums up, and accounts for the life lived, while steadily gesturing at preparations for the judgment of an audience, whether human or divine. Next to Three Poems, Flow Chart is perhaps Ashbery's most personal and intimate work, if one accepts these terms as describing the qualities of lyric that urge the conflation of speaker, poet, and person, or the blurring of the boundary of life and art, though in Ashbery's autobiographical mode the blurring

does not bring us back to empirical persons as much as to the multiple selves one is familiar with from the immediate emotional dramas of the condensed and displaced autobiography of dreams.

The conflation of speaker, poet, and person is also urged, however, by a less intimate scale of concern. Of all Ashbery's poems, Flow Chart is the one most concerned with poetic legacy and the monumentality of a life's work, a concern which, coming this late after modernism, would seem anachronistic, related as it is to "an earlier / grand idea of the importance of one's actions" (Flow 56).7 Flow Chart manifests the boundary between the poem, particularly a monumental poem, and the singularity of experience by citing and alluding to the poems of Bishop, whose work, rather than being "awash with sentiments expelled from some impossibly / distant situation; some episode from your childhood nobody knows about and even you can't remember accurately" (11), only obliquely discloses the personal or private inner life. As if taking the measure of his poetics of the everyday and the accidental, Ashbery in the most serious moments of Flow Chart seems haunted by Bishop's feeling in "Over 2,000 Illustrations" that "our travels" should have been "serious, engravable" (CP 57). Reflecting on the conflicting scales of autobiography and monumentality, he often alludes to Bishop's work, beginning with the first page's reference to "the diagram" and "a strand of rotted hulks" (Flow 3), allusions to Bishop's "cobbled courtyard ... like a diagram" (CP 57) and Dingle Harbor's "rotting hulks" (58). Indeed, it may be that Ashbery turns to Bishop—perhaps even literally on the first day of the six-month, page-by-page composition of his poem following his mother's death—as a poet whose work has come to be read by critics and by other poets as centered, however invisibly, on her mother's absence.8

The echoes of Bishop are numerous enough that, just as Wordsworth addressed *The Prelude* to his friend Coleridge, so Ashbery may have Bishop in mind when he addresses his auditor: "Oh my / friend that knew me before I knew you" (*Flow* 7). Pronouns in Ashbery are never so determinate, however, that one could or would even need to identify an interlocutor in this way. The address to the "friend" in *Flow Chart* identifies him or her ("in the ivory frame" of a mirror or photograph) as an intimate companion with whom the speaker shared a "lost, unhappy youth." The wiser and more knowing friend, who when he or she came to the speaker "knew it was forever," has the power instantly to remind him of the happiness in sorrow and separation that each constitutes for

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the other: "It seemed our separate / lives could continue separately for themselves and shine like a single star. / I never knew such happiness. I never knew such happiness could exist" (8). Flow Chart is above all a poem that maps the wide range of feeling and mood associated with intimacy, loss, love, and abandonment, an affective complex that Ashbery points to, punning on grief: "to whose parents should I submit the grievance form?" (Flow 128). The first set of echoes of Bishop I want to consider concerns the tension between the desire to be alone, on the one hand, and a feeling of abandonment on the other—both parts of a primal affective complex explored thoroughly by Bishop in "The End of March" and "Crusoe in England," poems that Ashbery echoes persistently.

To begin with "Crusoe in England," it is not by chance that the second of Ashbery's allusions to Bishop, as we have just seen, is the phrase "strand of rotted hulks." Later his "inhospitable strand" (Flow 57) evokes the figure of the stranded castaway, which recurs throughout the poem, first appearing on page 12. The speaker there talks of "regret, / not for what happened, or even for what could conceivably have happened, but / for what never happened and which therefore exists, as dark / and transparent as a dream," and compares such events to

ships, lands which no one sees, islands scattered like pebbles across the immense surface of the ocean; this is what it is to believe and not see, to implore dreaming, then to arrive home by cunning, stricken and exhausted, a framed picture of oneself. (12)

At this point Ashbery cites Cowper's "The Castaway": "when such a destin'd wretch / as I, wash'd headlong from on board." But more present than Cowper is "Crusoe in England," with its vision of "nightmares of other islands / stretching away from mine, infinities / of islands" (CP 165). More importantly, Ashbery later echoes the moment when Bishop's Crusoe, only just having introduced us to Friday, describes the end of his sojourn on his island. Where Bishop writes "And then one day they came and took us off" (166), Ashbery has "You see I wasn't going to be a good boy. / They just came. Took me" (53).

These lines appear in a long sequence replete with allusions not only to "Over 2000 Illustrations" but also to Bishop's "The End of March." Ashbery's sequence begins "on a chilly afternoon in March" (54) and ends

six pages later with "the eternal barren beginning of March" (59).9 Like "The End of March," it is concerned with solitude and relations with others: "we are never on our own," he writes, "And in glacial / pockets of this repercussion were still not meant to be ourselves, until / some cruel stranger forces us to be, and leaves" (53). The cruel stranger who inaugurates this sequence is a certain Herr Schmidt, a teacher or mentor and lover who, unlike the speaker of Flow Chart, is "after all all / [he] set out to be": "You flattered me I was higher up on the ladder / than any of the other pupils," and yet "when I came to be eight . . . the waters receded and left," leaving the speaker abandoned to "the unexplained outside," an outside familiar to Bishop's readers not only from "The End of March" and "Crusoe in England" but also of course from "In the Waiting Room," which concludes with the flat, declarative, "Outside ... were night and slush and cold" (CP 161). Still meditating on the memory of Herr Schmidt and his separation from him, Ashbery figures the moment of abandonment and loss, of being stranded: "In order to land on that shred / of inhospitable strand one is forced to jettison certain / muchbeloved possessions, including, I'm afraid, that key" (57). While the "inhospitable strand" may resemble Crusoe's island, not least in that Crusoe is "strand[ed]" there, Ashbery also alludes to Bishop's "One Art," which recommends—in a tone just as quaveringly authoritative as Ashbery's, though slightly more ambivalent—that in order to learn to lose properly one might start by "Accept[ing] the fluster / of lost door keys" (178) as preparation for the more dramatic gesture of deliberately losing things.

Ashbery's speaker refers to a small group of "keepers of the trust," most likely poets or writers, "who have to / somehow find the missing key that at this moment is within the grasp of a leper / who plays with it, not knowing" (57). Throughout Flow Chart the motif of writing as "keeping track of expenses / in a ledger acquired for just this purpose" (81) contrasts with the art of losing. The art of keeping trust is an art of remembering. Ashbery follows the passage on Herr Schmidt with a brief cry of exasperation or complaint against the forces that impede our coming to be: "Ah, but then, what new / problems, taxis, taking years to get an accounting, while daffodils, long dead, continue / to droop sideways" (53–54). These long-dead daffodils still droop because they have yet to be resuscitated in a Wordsworthian inner vision, and the failure of memory is the poet's, who, "exchanging one neutral memory for another" (54), sees only sameness: "Meanwhile the same film strip / is projected endlessly

across one's forehead. One has seen it so many times!" These daffodils are not only Wordsworth's, of course, but also Bishop's. Her Crusoe, also subject to a failure of memory, recites to his iris beds (which are of course snail shells): "They flash upon that inward eye, / Which is the bliss...' The bliss of what?" (164). The bliss of solitude, as we know.

Rather than accept the fluster of losing, however, Ashbery's speaker gives in to the pain of being the object lost, crying out, "O if only one belonged to something" (57). The speaker's wish to belong to something may mean that "life would be harder perhaps," but it is less painful than having to learn to lose "certain / much-beloved possessions" in order finally to be alone, as Bishop imagines herself to be in her "crypto-dream house" in "The End of March." To master the art of losing would be to seek and find solitude—forcefully to dissolve one's attachments, to induce mourning in anticipation of loss—but Bishop's poem of course cannot claim such mastery is possible. Solitude is marked by neither autonomy nor self-sufficiency; in both Bishop and Ashbery solitude is permeable to the feeling of abandonment or loss, to the intimate wound at the point of separation from another. The art of losing, which cannot achieve mastery over disaster, is an art of holding oneself apart, but also an art of intimate community, an art of friendship or companionship among those who have abided loss.

While Ashbery is a great love poet, and his addressees are often lovers, he is also a great poet of intimate companionship, as Andrew Epstein has recently argued (127–46). This is perhaps one reason why siblings and twins figure so prominently in his poems, including Flow Chart. In a series of allusions to the "crypto-dream house" of Bishop's "End of March," Ashbery imagines her dream of solitude as culminating in a point of (readerly) connection: "It occurs to me in my home on the beach / sometimes that others must have experiences identical to mine / and are also unable to speak of them" (23). If we turn a hundred pages ahead in Flow Chart we hear an echo once again of Bishop's "Poem" and its moment of recognition that there is more than one person present: Bishop's "Heavens, I recognize the place, I know it!" (CP 176) is audible in Ashbery's "But—by heaven!—I think we almost knew just then what it meant to be together / without too many people around" (Flow 126).

"Poem" is a poem about belonging, possessing, and the art of keeping. Not only does the speaker inherit a small painting from her maternal aunt, she also discovers an unexpected sense of connectedness to a great

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uncle she never knew. Bishop's opening description lightly personifies the painting:

[It] has never earned any money in its life.
Useless and free, it has spent seventy years
as a minor family relic
handed along collaterally to owners
who looked at it sometimes, or didn't bother to. (176)

While the painting is figured as a member of the family, the family itself becomes reduced to "owners" who pass things along and are prone to casual indifference. This is not to suggest that the poem judges these owners harshly, however; the aunt who gives the painting to the speaker values it even as she treats it as "a minor family relic." She is careful to identify the person who painted it—"Your Uncle George, no, mine, my Uncle George, / He'd be your great uncle"—the person whom the speaker, until the moment of recognition, only names "the artist," as if we didn't need to know and the poem did not need to divulge the personal identity. When he is named, when to recall his name in the poem does matter, also recalled is the odd moment of confusion over whose Uncle George he was. The detail of the aunt's momentary confusion suggests the contingency of remembering and of family history. If there are two Uncle Georges, one may be wrongly credited with the painting, and their difference must be remembered. The possessive pronouns remind us that family members are "owners" and that persons belong to us, at least potentially, in singular ways, even as they are shared. When the aunt says "Your Uncle George" when it is her Uncle George, how has she mistakenly identified herself? One can hear in hers the voices, perhaps parental but certainly adult, that referred to him always as "your Uncle George." The confusion signals the blurring of differences that comes with the intimacy of the moment. When the aunt says that Uncle George "left [the paintings, 'these things'] all with Mother" (177), a similar slippage has occurred, since the mother of the aunt is not the mother of the speaker—the mother often palpably absent from Bishop's poems. Her confusion suggests the slippages of relation that happen when an aunt, for example, might feel like a sister. 10

Though the focus remains on the painting, it is inseparable from Uncle George's intimate presence. The speaker says she "never knew him," but the intimacy she feels gives a double sense to the odd locution

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"our years apart" (177): it means that his sketching the scene was done "naturally before [her] time," but it also suggests that they were at some point parted. The intimacy of the poem's mergings and slippages of identity (a motif picked up later in "they've turned into each other. Which is which?") is inseparable from the sense of loss hinted at in the details: the aunt, for example, is moving into a smaller place, her aging suggested by her "probably never / hav[ing] room to hang these things again"; the painting's "seventy years" is roughly the span of a human life; and "Mother," having passed away, has already had to give up "these things." But to hand along the painting "collaterally" is to provide collateral as protection against loss. Though the poem does permit the poignancy of loss and forgetting to emerge, it only does so as the painting discloses the power of abidance. We are made to feel that its abidance has not been and is still not guaranteed: a small material object, the painting could easily have disappeared, or never been "handed over" or "along."

While there is an art of losing, there is also an art of keeping, exemplified by the aunt's handing along the painting. While she gives the painting up, she does so in a way that transfers responsibility to her niece. To keep is also to keep trust. Yet Bishop insists in "Poem" on the smallness of what her speaker is made responsible for, and her initial attitude to the painting is not notable for its respect. Her attention idles over the painting, and there is a slight mocking audible in her opening personification of it as a mildly burdensome senior passed from relative to relative. After the painting discloses the power of abidance, the speaker is careful to insist on its smallness, and the smallness of the "earthly trust" she has accepted. This is also an insistence on the personal scale, the private person, the merely autobiographical. Though the poem's acceptance of this smallness is unembarrassed, it also retains the surprise that this "minor family relic" is not only worth keeping but is worth presenting to readers in a poem. As with Ashbery's speaker in "Ode to Bill," who wears the vest made for him "Out of loyalty to the person," Bishop's speaker finds pleasure in the duty of keeping the painting.

Yet the predominant sense of Ashbery's invocation of Bishop's "Over 2000 Illustrations," I've suggested, is diminishment in the face of engrable experience: "Thus should have been our travels" (CP 57). As Ashbery writes at one of the many moments in Flow Chart where this sense of diminishment occurs (again echoing Bishop): "I wish I had something more sizable to say— / couldn't my part be rewritten?" (38; cf. 81). The

feeling is that though we ought not to have been losers we had nothing worth keeping. Or perhaps that what remains with us is something debilitating that is also merely personal, and therefore not worth mentioning or thinking about. The speaker reports a conversation in which his expectation of an understanding audience is disappointed: "and you know what he said, he said, well, it's reasonable for you to expect that / but it's not unreasonable for anyone else to pay it no mind, so there! I was / crushed. The one person I thought understood" (39). If there are moments of understanding, Ashbery often qualifies them by noting, for example, that they were "out of tune with the rest that was going on, like a canary in a zoo" (39).

Your Name Here (2000) would also seem to have been composed with Bishop's book close to hand. Until the recent A Worldly Country, dedicated to Barbara Epstein, Your Name Here was the only book of Ashbery's dedicated to a recently deceased person. This was Ashbery's former lover and friend of more than 40 years, Pierre Martory (to whom Ashbery's 1962 Tennis Court Oath is also dedicated). Such a dedication is a sign of "loyalty to the person" that marks the poems of grief in this volume as akin to the intimate voice in Flow Chart. A profoundly elegaic book, Your Name Here addresses the shame of surviving one's loved ones. This first becomes apparent in "Bloodfits," which explicitly echoes Bishop's "Five Flights Up":

As inevitable as a barking dog, second-hand music drifts down five flights of stairs and out into the street, adjusting seams, checking makeup in pocket mirror.

(Your Name Here 15)

In Bishop's dawn poem, "[t]he little dog next door barks in his sleep / inquiringly, just once." When the "[e]normous morning" arrives, "ponderous, meticulous."

The little black dog runs in his yard. His owner's voice arises, stern, "You ought to be ashamed!" What has he done? He bounces cheerfully up and down; he rushes in circles in the fallen leaves.

Obviously he has no sense of shame. (CP 181)

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We don't know what the dog has done, but we can speculate, as Ashbery might be doing in "De Senectute" (50-51):

You will, upon opening your garage door, stumble

on some unpleasant evidence of your neighbor's dog's recent passage. Is there anything you can do?

No. Later on in spring, when the robins

are nesting, something will splat on your car's windshield or windscreen.

"De Senectute" is one of the poems that most openly addresses the aging, loss, and death that haunt this book. Concerning the topic of aging identified in its title, it asserts that "Fifty is young today. So's eighty. Depends / on which side you're looking at it from." While the allusion to "Five Flights Up" might seem to have little place in a poem about aging, the speaker's grief does evoke Bishop's motif of shame:

Pensively, the watch crystal's

warning us to be off, ere another hour strikes. Oh, I love you so much in such a little time it seems a shame to have to go on living.

Yet another hour protrudes.

Can we ask of this speaker, as Bishop's speaker asks of the dog, "What has he done?" The expression "it seems a shame" does not imply moral responsibility but an impersonal condition in which regrettable things happen. As the speaker says of the "evidence of the neighbor's dog's / recent passage," there is nothing you can do:

Again, it profits not to go looking for causes and effects

in a froth of rage whipped up by someone else.

Though Bishop's poem too concerns a mistaken imputation of respon-

sibility, she nonetheless asks "What has he done?" Though the question is primarily rhetorical—its impatience, if that is the tone, or its anger, is directed at the owner's sternness—it also implies that the dog must or could have done something serious enough to elicit the stern reaction. This immediate reaction is what the poem corrects in the final stanza: in spite of the stern voice addressed to the dog, he cannot be made to feel shame. That first line is more the speaker's remembering something she ought to know than stating something she knows in an immediate sense: "Obviously, he has no sense of shame." Its rebuke of the owner acknowledges her own forgetting what is obvious: that the dog has no shame, and to say that properly one must relieve the statement of any of the moral sense carried by "he is shameless," or "has he no shame?" It acknowledges that she shares the owner's unthinking predisposition to attribute moral responsibility, and that it is difficult to evade such moral thinking when questions of responsibility so permeate the psyche.

Given its connection to Bishop's poem, what then can it mean for Ashbery's speaker to say "it seems a shame to have to go on living"? Is there a moral dimension, an implicit sense of responsibility, to that regret? This question can take us far into Ashbery's work, in which questions of action, responsibility, and guilt recur. There is a hint at least in these lines of the guilt of the survivor for whom "Yet another hour protrudes." The notion of shame is implicated not only in this poem, however; in what is, as far as I know, the only instance in Ashbery's work of the repetition of a line from one poem in another, he writes in "The File on Thelma Jordan" earlier in Your Name Here:

Oh, I love you so much in such a little time. It seems a shame we have to go on living. I mean, we could get more loving into it. I'm not quitting. I mean, I am but I'm not a quitter.

Whoever said you were? (39)

The only difference between this earlier line and its later variation is that "we" is substituted for "to," suggesting that the person who is later lost still remains in this poem. But the sense is very different: having "to go on living" is a shame here because love seems to require only "a little time," as if too much time will deplete it. If going on living jeopardizes the intensity of love, love finds its fulfillment or its completion in death. It is as if the speaker blurts out this death wish, and then tries to correct himself

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for the sake of the lover: "I mean," he says, turning to the language of moral responsibility, "we could get more loving into it." Again acknowledging that what he has just said can hurt his lover, he denies that he is quitting only then to admit it, while denying the moral judgment that he is a quitter. Presumably it is the lover who replies with some surprise, "Whoever said you were?" which suggests that the speaker has privately been having a conversation with a troubling inner voice rather than with the lover, circling around a sense of shame or guilt at his own failure to love properly or adequately.

"The File on Thelma Jordan" and "De Senectute" touch on this sense of moral failure in another register. In "The File" a "poseur held up a scroll . . . about an annual charity bazaar. We'd forgotten / it again, in the garden, this year" (38). In "De Senectute" the speaker says: "I'm not going to the benefit. / I hate charity. But it's the greatest / of the three. Can't help it" (50). Once again, the sense of responsibility is both acknowledged and refused: the speaker and his companion simply forgot to go to the charity bazaar in the first case, while in the second he refuses to go, and "[c]an't help" his inability to recognize it as the greatest of the three cardinal virtues (hope and faith, of course, being the other two).

In these conversations with himself, or with a companion, we can hear the speaker responding to voices that challenge him morally, and against whose charges he becomes defensive: "You ought to be ashamed!" they might be saying, like the voice that Bishop overhears from her fifthfloor apartment. In Bishop's poem, the dog's bark and the bird's "quavering" note sound to her speaker like "Questions—if that is what they are - / answered directly, simply, / by day itself." For her, however, the self-doubting question ("What has he done" to deserve this rebuke?) goes unanswered. The poem in no way suggests that she can share what the dog and the bird, unburdened by shame, know: that "everything is answered," / all taken care of, / no need to ask again."The "ponderous, meticulous" morning is thus unrelieved: "Yesterday brought to today so lightly! / (A yesterday I find almost impossible to lift.)" Much of Bishop's poetry is shaped by inaudible or barely audible dialogues and voices, whether the comforting ones of the grandparents in "The Moose" or those in "Five Flights Up."The disquieting voices are most audible when Crusoe talks to himself in his self-pity:

"Do I deserve this? I suppose I must. I wouldn't be here otherwise. Was there

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a moment when I actually chose this? I don't remember, but there could have been." (163)

Crusoe, however, finds comfort in his self-pity, perhaps recognizing that although this doubling of the self can be persecuting, self-pity is also a form of caring for the self: "Pity should begin at home.' So the more / pity I felt, the more I felt at home" (163).

The speaker of Ashbery's "Poem on Several Occasions," from Your Name Here, is haunted by an "admonitory hiss" of shame and inadequacy that might remind us of the one on Crusoe's island in Bishop's poem: "the whole place hissed" (163). However, for him there are other voices that counter it:

In truth there is room for disquiet in the wake of the admonitory hiss that accompanies me wherever I go, to the dentist and back or sometimes a squeak of approval will eavesdrop on what I just said, or even a tiny quiver of applause will blur in the middle distance, causing even more distant dogs to bark. (Your Name Here 99)

We can recognize here little Elizabeth Bishop's visit to the dentist's office with her aunt, and that "oh! of pain" that was not the aunt's voice, but as Elizabeth says, "was me: / my voice, in my mouth" (CP 160). Ashbery's allusion to Bishop is comparable to Bishop's confusing her voice with Aunt Consuelo's "cry of pain," though here the "oh!" is a "squeak of approval." The "admonitory hiss," however, is always there, and alluding to Bishop's embarrassing identification, the hiss elicits the shame of discovering that one could be such a thing as one's "foolish aunt." Ashbery's intimacy with Bishop here elucidates the passage in Flow Chart about the speaker's "home on the beach." As if recalling Crusoe's assertion that "self-pity begins at home," writers who would seek "even a tiny quiver of applause" are unable in such a moment of approval, almost of reluctant welcome, to escape a shame associated with the home they seem to have sought:

Home becomes more than a place, more even than a concept for this elite minority, and then singles them out by pointing so that some symbol of their shame never goes away, until the paper it is written on has rotted over thousands of years ... (Flow 23-24)

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Moreover, seven lines after mentioning his "home on the beach," Ashbery describes it as a "waiting room" (23), reminding us once again of Bishop's poem, and the shameful discovery that "I was my foolish aunt."

Shame for what? There is probably no single narrative to explain this Shame for what: There is provided by south of the explain this affective complex in Bishop's and Ashbery's work. 11 Ashbery in particular the explain this affective complex in Bishop's and Ashbery's work. 11 Ashbery in particular this affective complex in Bishop's and Ashbery's work. 11 Ashbery in particular this affective complex in Bishop's and Ashbery's work. 11 Ashbery in particular this affective complex in Bishop's and Ashbery's work. 11 Ashbery in particular this affective complex in Bishop's and Ashbery's work. 12 Ashbery in particular this affective complex in Bishop's and Ashbery's work. 13 Ashbery in particular this affective complex in Bishop's and Ashbery's work. 14 Ashbery in particular this affective complex in Bishop's and Ashbery's work. 15 Ashbery in particular this affective complex in Bishop's and Ashbery's work. 15 Ashbery in particular this affective complex in Bishop's and Ashbery's work. 15 Ashbery in particular this affective complex in Bishop's and Bish affective complex in District affectives by multiplying them; he also reflects on them repeatedly, always to affirm that the complexes such narratives seek to explain may "have no discernible root" (Flow 10), that they may be shadows cast by a "dream from nowhere" (12). If Crusoe cannot remember what he did to deserve his lot, he still believes "there could have been" something. Ashbery's speaker in Flow Chart is more urgent; "A sore spot in my memory undoes what I have just written / as fast as I can write" (60). Some failure of responsibility recurs to explain the debilitating effect of remembering and accounting, as if one has always started to remember too late. Flow Chart repeatedly suggests that if one doesn't keep track of one's losses by means of an art of keeping, accounts will be kept-secretly-for one. Lives of renunciation in which the art of losing has apparently been mastered, lives that have refused attachment and belonging, will at a certain point come to judgment. As Ashbery writes, describing the art of losing in its moral guise of selflessness: it is with "lives entirely given over to sacrifice / and austerity, cautions the tome, that the greatest losses, the worst / atrocities will be instigated and immediately tallied" (80).

Flow Chart is a monumental poem of commemoration. However, commemoration is also an exacting duty, and the emotional curve of Flow Chart leaves much room for the power of the affective complex we glimpse in Bishop's "Five Flights Up" and in Ashbery's incorporations of Bishop's other poems. And yet while the failure to remember, or to remember adequately, to be one of "the keepers of the trust," has as a consequence feelings of regret, guilt, and shame, these feelings also amount to a kind of patient humility: "In time all excuses merge in an arch / whose keystone overlooks heaven, and / we must be patient if we are to live that far, at our own expense, this time, without that" (59). This keystone is, I think, borrowed from Bishop's "Over 2000 Illustrations," where the speaker says of her paratactically linked travels, "what frightened me most of all" was an "open, gritty marble trough . . . one of a group under a keyhole-arched stone baldaquin" (CP 58). Ashbery remembers Bishop and incorporates her fear in a moment of redemptive identification—and

perhaps we can hear in his "keystone [that] overlooks heaven" another echo of Bishop's "Heavens, I recognize the place," as Bishop and Ashbery "occupy the same space" (111), contrary to Ashbery's earlier claim that it's not possible. This is the art of keeping "our earthly trust" as a diminished thing: "Not much," but an object of care. As Ashbery describes the feeling: "it was like looking for a lost object / and finding it in the palm of your hand" (87). The smallness recalls the great–uncle's painting, and perhaps a line from Ashbery's "The Business of Falling Asleep (2)," from *Chinese Whispers*, can be taken as a comment on Bishop's "Poem": "It's amazing how the past shrinks to the size of your palm, forced to hold all that now" (90). 13

While Flow Chart is occasioned by Ashbery's response to his mother's death, such an autobiographical subject may matter both too much and too little to sanction such a colossal project. Nonetheless, like Bishop's monument, the awkward decorations of which "give it away as having life, and wishing; / wanting to be a monument, to cherish something" (CP 24), so Ashbery's monumental poem is, among many other things, a sheltering and a cherishing intended to protect an intimate presence, as if it must be remembered even though, like Bishop's "The Monument," it "cannot have been intended to be seen" (CP 25). If the poem is occasioned by his mother's death and returns to motifs of abandonment and loss, Ashbery turns to Bishop for a consolation that is reciprocated by his gestures of incorporation, which also answer Bishop's monument's need to "commemorate" (24). We saw the structure of this reciprocal consolation in "Ode to Bill," where the absence of the vest's maker and the solitude of the vest's wearer are eased by the "inner vision of what I look like," which I attribute to the gaze of the absent other—as if the one look is Bishop's "our looks, two looks" (CP 177). What Ashbery calls "loyalty to the person" extends to the nameable persons who haunt the books and poems discussed or alluded to above: Ashbery's mother, Bishop, Pierre Martory.

Notes

1. Helen Vendler argues for a genre of lyric intimacy that is distinct from "the lyric of solitary meditation" in being addressed to an invisible other in which "[t]here is room . . . for aspiration, repentance, envy, resentment, joy, and all the other emotions attending relationship" (80). While her chapter on Ashbery focuses on "Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror," Flow Chart to my mind exhibits

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- a much wider range of affect and is an exemplary instance of the genre. For a recent discussion of the later Ashbery as a poet of intimate pronouns, see Vincent, particularly his discussion of *Your Name Here* (145–60).
- 2. Ashbery's longstanding appreciation of Bishop is evident in his two essays on her work: "Throughout Is This Quality of Thingness," a review of the 1969 edition of *The Complete Poems* (Selected Prose 120–24), and "Second Presentation of Elizabeth Bishop," his recommendation of her for the 1976 Neustadt International Prize for Literature (Selected Prose 164–71). For one of the few discussions of the relationship between Bishop and Ashbery, see Ford. For a discussion of Hölderlin's presence in Ashbery, see my "Render unto Caesura"; on Ashbery and Clare see Ashbery's chapter on him in Other Traditions (1–22) and Fletcher's discussion of "Ashbery's Clare [as] an intimate friend to his muse and to musing" (63) who shares with him an "intimate relation to the universe" (74).
- 3. One exception to this consensus is Andrew Epstein's recent discussion of friendship in Ashbery's poetry, which argues, among other things, for the namable presence of Frank O'Hara in Ashbery's A Double Dream of Spring. Particularly after John Shoptaw's book on Ashbery, Epstein's observation that "Ashbery is perpetually self-chronicling in his poems . . . as he tells skewed and vague narratives about his poetic career and his development both with and away from his companions" (147) reflects an attitude more and more acceptable among Ashbery's critics. In place of further comments on this point, I refer the reader to Epstein's helpful summary of the conventional understanding of Ashbery's approach to other poets (311n3). He notes that Lynn Keller's observation that Ashbery's "own love affairs and friendships can frequently be glimpsed in his poetry" (Keller 40) is "one rather rare in Ashbery criticism" (Epstein 130).
- 4. Though I have mentioned Herbert only in parallel with Ashbery, he was a more influential figure for Bishop, and according to her own testimony, his poem "Love Unknown" was a particular influence on "The Weed" (qtd. in Schwartz and Estess 295). See Powers–Beck for a useful summary (to 1995) of the critical attention to Herbert's influence on Bishop. Also see Summers, particularly his discussion of Bishop's "dialogues within the self" (52) and the expression of "misery, self-questioning, and judgment" in her poems (53).
- 5. My notion of reciprocal care borrows from Christopher Bollas's illuminating discussion of the role of "the mother's aesthetic of care" (35) in constituting "the self as object" to itself and others. His discussion of the roles of voice (e.g. 44) and language (35) can I think be applied to the way Ashbery reads and incorporates Bishop as intimately as I am suggesting. Zimmerman's attempt "to

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enrich our sense of how her work explores what 'loss' means" (496) in terms of object-relations theory (in particular W. R. Bion's notion of containment) illuminates how her work risks vulnerability or exposure to "nameless dread" (Zimmerman 503, quoting Bion) as part of the "perpetual human task" (Zimmerman 497, quoting D. W. Winnicott) of shaping malleable linguistic (and so intersubjective) spaces of containment or sheltering. See in particular his discussion of "In the Waiting Room" (511–14).

- 6. I am grateful to Heather White for drawing this poem to my attention.
- 7. For good discussions of this dimension of the poem, see Berger and LoLordo.
- 8. For an extensive and astute analysis of Bishop's work in terms of mourning, see McCabe. Bonnie Costello, in her reading of "Crusoe in England," both summarizes and provides a powerful corrective to this continuing tendency in Bishop criticism.
- 9. As the speaker says at the end of the sequence, "sometimes the sun is good, but it just seems like it won't go away" (59). Earlier he refers to "the sun's pointing these acerated surfaces" (54), echoed later in "bright facets," which recall Bishop's lion-sun (also perhaps alluded to in Ashbery's "the paws that go on escaping" [55]). Most compelling, somewhat later, Bishop is virtually cited: "The sun / came out for just a little while" (187).
- 10. This aspect of what I am calling intimacy is lucidly discussed by Victoria Harrison, who argues that intimacy, which Bishop's early work seeks and her mature poetics is based on, is established in the intermediate space of the poem that relates subjects and subjects, and subjects and objects. Such relational subjectivity, Harrison writes, which "is layered, contradictory, and blurred at the edges between lovers, friends, or family members" (44), is particularly defining of Bishop's work because of the trauma of her mother's mental illness and absence. A poem like "Sestina," to which I would also add "Poem," a poem not discussed by Harrison, demonstrates how objects and subjects can find relationships of reciprocal care and attachment in the "decenter[ing] of the mother-child dyad" (110), suggesting that there are potentials for connectedness that surpass what Zimmerman rightly calls the "ostensible kinship" explored by "In the Waiting Room" (513).
- 11. Though I am refraining from any particular narrative, there are several suitable psychoanalytic explanations for the presence of this intimate other. A suitable narrative would need to satisfy two requirements: first, Ashbery's abstraction does not allow us to name particular names, and suggests instead the infinite mourning that comes with a loss more primal than persons; second,

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the particularity of these echoes of and allusions to Bishop, and of the two dedications to Martory, requires that "loyalty to the person" be recognized and respected—that persons do more than embody or instantiate the anonymous poetic, psychic, or linguistic function of otherness. Both of these demands would to my mind be met by a psychoanalytic narrative that can correlate the abstract functions most visible in Lacanian psychoanalysis with the singularity of names such as Bishop and Martory. Jean Laplanche's revisions of the Lacanian theory of trauma, which insists on the particularity of the "enigmatic signifier[s]" introduced into the subject by the singular others caring for the infant, offer a way of reconciling the abstract (and abstracting) functions of meaning with the imperative to particularize persons as others in the process of translating one's unconscious in self-representation. For a concise introduction to Laplanche, see John Fletcher's introduction to Laplanche's Essays on Otherness (1–51).

12. This scene is also echoed in Ashbery's "curse it, no water in the watering trough. Yes but the horse said he didn't want any" (58), which picks up on an earlier "watering-trough [that] is merely mud now and a few puddles of camel-stale" (13). The animals of these parallel passages echo Bishop's "the human figure far gone . . . gone with its camel or its faithful horse" (*CP* 57).

13. The particular memory Ashbery's speaker recalls here is "Falling down the steps in Marlborough Street" (Chinese 90). If Ashbery's proximity to Bishop when it comes to the constellation of attitude and affect centered on shame is what I am arguing it is, then perhaps some readers might wonder if this memory is also a memory of an image from Bishop's Key West notebooks: "that loneliness like falling on / the sidewalk in a crowd / that fills { } { } with shame, some / slow, elaborate, shame" (Edgar Allen Poe 79; cited in Harrison 68). I do not know if Ashbery would have read these notebooks or this passage, or if the Marlborough Street to which he refers is the one in Boston.

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Frames of Reference:

Paterson in "In the Waiting Room"

Claire Bowen

Elizabeth Bishop built her much-beloved late poem "In the Waiting Room" on a childhood memory of reading National Geographic. Her memory, however, was pointedly inaccurate: the "grown-up" poet who speaks "In the Waiting Room" invented the riveting photographs that the child Elizabeth sees in "National Geographic, / February, 1918" (Complete Poems 160). Bishop's photofiction is not news. Already 15 years ago, Brett Millier observed that many of Bishop's contemporary critics "fairly cackled with glee at catching her in an inconsistency" (445). (Such relish was misguided. Bishop readily admitted the fictionality of her recollected National Geographic both publicly and privately.1) Although in the intervening years, Bishop's invented photographs—especially one of topless African women—have been read as coded deposits of the poet's homosexuality or political worldview,2 the literary referentiality of Bishop's citation of the magazine remains largely unexamined. For what other text might National Geographic stand? Or: what does Bishop read under "the cover / of National Geographic, / February, 1918"? This essay argues that "In the Waiting Room" activates two kinds of allusion. Wrapping an iconic pop-cultural reference around a high literary allusion, Bishop's treatment of the ubiquitous National Geographic echoes and alters the "Geographic picture" lyric that William Carlos Williams plants early in Paterson I. I contend that the occasional text of "In the Waiting Room," National Geographic, participates in the collapse of chronology on which the poem relies throughout.3 As the speaker's adult perspective frames the telling of her childhood experience, so the speaker's adult reading inflects the child's reading. As the speaker reads "grown-up" matter over her child self's shoulder, Bishop

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superimposes Williams's reading of National Geographic in Paterson I onto her own recollection of reading National Geographic.

I am less concerned with proving the intentionality of Bishop's allusion to Williams than with exploring the viability, and the consequences for interpretation, of the intertextual claim. Nothing in Bishop's letters, drafts, or extrapoetic commentary will confirm that she had Williams in mind as she wrote "In the Waiting Room." In place of such "hard" evidence, I juxtapose Paterson I and "In the Waiting Room" and link the two poems by way of close readings and telling contingencies of Bishop's and Williams's intertwined publication histories. I contend that lack of such conventional evidence ought not preclude examination of an audible echo—certainly not when the examination underwrites a new reading of one of Bishop's most important poems and unsettles acquired accounts of her poetic persona. Bishop's reputation for modesty and deference has recently undergone vital critical revision, especially around the question of her political engagement. Those early overworn points of reference, though, continue to limit readings of Bishop's poetic engagement, of how this "poet's poet" also responded critically to poetic models and precedents.4 This essay, then, moves toward redressing that limitation by taking the hint of Paterson I in "In the Waiting Room."

A final introductory point: if accustomed modes of reading Bishop or her work have forestalled consideration of her allusion to Williams in "In the Waiting Room," then the difficulty of classifying her citation only compounds the problem. Parody, refutation, revision, critique: these pointed terms do not quite capture the simultaneous blatancy and understatement of Bishop's allusive mode in "In the Waiting Room." Her response to Williams is most helpfully approached as a methodological problem, as strategic misdirection. Responding to Williams, Bishop's poem capitalizes on the conspicuousness of both the *National Geographic* and its pictures of half-naked women; the ubiquity of the magazine and the notoriety of that particular genre of photograph hide her reference to *Paterson I* in plain sight.⁵

"A Geographic picture"

The ubiquity of National Geographic in twentieth-century American class-rooms, waiting rooms, and households is well known, as is the notoriety of its photographs of women in what Westerners consider a state of partial undress. By the magazine's own chagrined admission in its hundredth

anniversary issue, its "portrayal of native women in their natural mode of dress . . . became a hallmark—and a source of countless jokes" in popular culture (qtd. in Neuhaus 19). National Geographic first published a photograph of a group of aboriginal women working in a Philippine rice field in 1903 (Abramson 140–41). From then until the boom in popular pornography in the 1960s, the magazine reigned as the sole "mass culture venue where Americans could see pictures of women's breasts" (Lutz and Collins 172). All the while, National Geographic staunchly denied but continued to profit from the sex appeal of its pictures of seminude women, labeling the photographs anthropological evidence and priding itself on its eschewal of editorial prudery.

In the literary realm, perusal of *National Geographic* recurs as a motif in mid-twentieth-century literature. Aside from Bishop's and Williams's citations of the magazine, examples abound: in Carson McCullers's *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* (1940), Mick Kelly escapes small-town boredom by going to the public library to look at pictures of foreign places in *National Geographic* (161); in a 1951 poem Frank O'Hara writes slyly of a poet who "slides warmly o'er the world / on nationally geographic carpets / never afraid of airsickness oh / what a dog he is for th'exotic" (36); at the conclusion of the *Life Studies* poem "During Fever" (1959), Robert Lowell casts his grandfather's practice of reading *National Geographic* while chaperoning his daughter and her male callers as exemplary of "that old life of decency" (80).

More explicitly than any of these examples, Williams's Paterson I showcases two familiar aspects of National Geographic: its educational value and its putatively pornographic content. Early in the long poem, Paterson recalls a picture he once saw in the magazine of nine topless women, and recalls too the arousal that this picture provoked. In broad terms, Williams's "Geographic picture" lyric tells one of those "countless jokes" that National Geographic has had to acknowledge in recent years. What is supposed to amuse is that parents encouraged their children to read and collect National Geographic even while the magazine's most notorious genre of photograph provided fodder for furtive sexual discovery and fantasy. Today's readers, appropriately attuned to notes of misogyny, exoticism, or racism, are unlikely to find Williams's lyric description of the "Geographic picture" funny. Still, the savvy poem stands as the key lyric prototype of the National Geographic joke—and as a keynote of the monumental Paterson.

Frames of Reference: Paterson in "In the Waiting Room"

Paterson I begins with repeated assertions of the guiding analogy of the long poem. In his author's note, Williams writes that "man in himself is a city . . . all the details of which may be made to voice his most intimate convictions" (xiv). He then announces the man-city analogy in the preface to Paterson I:

... rolling up out of chaos, a nine months' wonder, the city the man, an identity—it can't be otherwise—an interpenetration, both ways (4)

Paterson I, subtitled The Delineaments of the Giants, opens with a description of the topography of Paterson in bodily terms: "Paterson lies in the valley under the Passaic Falls / its spent waters forming the outline of his back" (6). While women are "Innumerable," there is "only one man—like a city" (7). The equation of man and city will continue throughout the poem. But the first time this man-city Paterson speaks in the first person, he speaks about National Geographic. That placement suggests that there is something uniquely relatable and masculine about his memory of the mainstream magazine.

National Geographic occupies an equally conspicuous and consequential place in the collage form of Paterson I. The long poem juxtaposes lyric passages and prose interpolations. Incorporating transcriptions of and quotations from letters, folklore, local histories, and advertisements, Williams builds the concept of intertextuality into the form of the poem. Excerpts from other texts typically retain the margins of prose and always appear in smaller type than the lyric content of Paterson, remaining visibly separate from the verse portions even as prose and verse interconnect thematically. Early in Paterson I, however, sandwiched between two prose sections, a small poem about National Geographic stands out amid the deliberately unwieldy assemblage. It begins:

I remember a Geographic picture, the 9 women of some African chief semi-naked astraddle a log, an official log to be presumed, heads left (13)

The poem that follows reproduces the five-line stanza four more times

and intersperses two tercets. The relative structural cohesion formally reflects the conspicuously composed quality of the focal "picture."

Williams's ekphrastic project in the poem is simple: a man describes a "Geographic picture" he once saw and chronicles his erotic reaction to it. His description of the remembered photograph proceeds in an orderly fashion from the young woman in the foreground to the other women "behind her" and finally to the eldest, rear-most wife. Meanwhile the poem participates in the tradition of sexualized connoisseurship: the adult speaker both details a picture and replays an adolescent erotic fantasy. Methodical description simulates a detachment that is undercut by visual inconsistencies, subjective assumptions, and crafted ambiguities. For one example, since the women's heads are seen in profile, the poet-viewer cannot see both "brows" of the newest wife in the second stanza or both "careworn eyes" of "the last, the first" wife in the fourth (13). For another, the speaker lapses from pictorial description into speculation about the characters of the women: he identifies a "proud queen, conscious of her power" and a "serious, menacing—but unabashed" wife. Next, the exclamation "present!" registers the speaker's awe at the oldest wife's appearing in the image at all—or even more, according to his gloss, at her "supporting all the rest growing / up from her" or commanding them to "present!" themselves. The expression also labels the tense of the stanza, with its three independent gerunds, and denotes the enduring, nostalgic presence of the image in the speaker's mind and poem. (To this point, the memory of "the first wife, with giraffish awkwardness" resurfaces in part 2 of Paterson I [20].)

Not surprisingly, this memory of adolescent ("growing / up") fantasy resolves into women's "semi-naked"-ness. This explicit pictorial focus is not without technical subtlety: when Williams describes the oldest wife's "breasts / sagging from hard use," the gerund clause weighs down the fourth stanza with a fittingly uncosmetic extra line—uncosmetic, that is, according to the evaluative terms that the "Geographic picture" lyric establishes. The memory of the picture and the fantasy it sparked settles finally on the young wife's body:

Whereas the uppointed breasts of that other, tense, charged with pressures unrelieved and the rekindling they bespoke was evident. (13)

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"Evident" to the speaker, perhaps, but not necessarily to the reader. That lofty "rekindling" heightens the diction of double-entendre on which the lyric relies. More clearly, if more crassly, than through the speaker's various subjective interpolations, the recollected (or rekindled) sexual fantasy of the poem within a poem registers in the adjective "erect," the verb "stiffened," and phrases such as "charged with / pressures unrelieved" and "astraddle a log." Any threat that the idea of these women might pose evaporates as the satisfied man, a "vague smile" on his face, relaxes "like a pigeon / after a long flight to his cote" (14).

It should be acknowledged that Williams's poem implicitly doubts the ethnographic factuality of its focal "Geographic picture." The speaker registers the picture's artificiality. He notes the wives clearly posed with "heads left" and their apparent refusal to smile for the Western camera. With these indications of phoniness and even of resistance, Williams mocks the status of National Geographic as an "official log." Mocks it and yet colludes with it, too. The humor of the Paterson lyric, like its erotic fantasy, relies on the double-valenced educational reputation of National Geographic: the magazine's stated "geographic" intention and its "graphic" notoriety in popular culture. The poem encapsulates a shared, illicit rite of masculine initiation.

From the "Geographic" to National Geographic

Metonymy directs Williams's treatment of National Geographic in Paterson I. He excerpts a recognizable exemplum to stand for the whole magazine. He refers to the magazine itself metonymically too, as simply the "Geographic," the elision of National offering a prime instance of the much-vaunted plain speaking of Paterson I. Bishop, by contrast, stresses that Elizabeth reads the entire magazine; her speaker pronounces the mouthful of the magazine's full title, National Geographic, three times in the short, measured lines of "In the Waiting Room." Such specific and repeated bibliographic citation paradoxically underlines Bishop's spurious citation of a professed source text. The effect of the repetition is to point up the adult speaker's fictional account of the young girl's reading matter. But the "grown-up" speaker of "In the Waiting Room" overlays the child's National Geographic with another "national" text, Williams's Paterson I. When Bishop revisits Williams's archetypal anecdote, she opposes the young Elizabeth in the dentist's waiting room to the masculine

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vantage that underwrites Williams's poem. The magazine motif enables and conceals Bishop's response to Williams and, more broadly, to the giant, masculine, and national poetics for which *Paterson* itself quickly became a metonym.

Here two tactics of intertextual argumentation present themselves as means of linking Bishop's discrete poem to Williams's embedded lyric. One might provide a history of the controversial, changing editorial politics of National Geographic, then assess the relative adequacy or inadequacy of Williams's and Bishop's discernible positions with regard to what twenty-first-century readers might recognize as the American imperialism that informed the purportedly benign magazine. Or one might substantiate the claim that Bishop responds specifically to Williams by enumerating the uncanny thematic similarities between "In the Waiting Room" and the "Geographic picture" lyric. The first strategy risks anachronism. Neither National Geographic nor sociological understanding of it remains the same in 2009 as it was in 1918 (when the child Elizabeth reads the magazine in Bishop's poem) or 1946 (when Paterson I was published) or 1971 (when "In the Waiting Room" first appeared in The New Yorker). The second course stands, in my view, at cross-purposes with Bishop's subtle allusive mode. Paterson I and "In the Waiting Room" do share a number of elements. But Bishop gathers such parallels under the cover of a mass-media topos so common that it occludes her implication of a specific literary instance of that topos. How, then, to frame a comparison of the two poems in terms other than accustomed (if important) political evaluations on the one hand or a tallying up of echoes on the other?

Modern giants

If, before turning to "In the Waiting Room," we attend to the poetry scene on which Bishop arrived with her first volume of poems in 1946, then relevant details of publication and reception history emerge—details that help to explain both why Bishop would tacitly cite Williams's "Geographic picture" lyric in "In the Waiting Room" and why that citation remains unconsidered. The publication of North & South on 22 August 1946, just three months after Paterson I, effectively guaranteed comparison of the books to each other in contemporary notices. Bishop's debut volume had been eagerly anticipated for some time. In the 5 October 1946 New Yorker, Louise Bogan mentioned that the opening poem of

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North & South, "The Map," had "first appeared in print in 1935" (in Ann Winslow's anthology of new poetry by young writers, Trial Balances). Bogan "hoped that we shall get thirty more, equally varied, unexpected, and freshly designed [poems], in rather less than another decade" (183). Praising Bishop's poetry for being "not the least bit showy" (182), she joined a chorus of reviewers hailing Bishop's appealing modesty, mildness, and generally small-scale poetics. Such praise for Bishop's "modesty" runs through the first notices, and when applied to Elizabeth Bishop's poetics, the term modesty—or its counterpart, accuracy—is likely to strike today's readers as tired, even dated. The idea of Bishop's characteristic demurral is dated indeed—specifically to 1946. Through no fault of either poet, Bishop's image began to coalesce in part in contradistinction to the images of Williams and Paterson I.

Bishop's entrance on the poetry scene, with North & South, coincided with Williams's post—World War II resurgence. The appearance of Paterson I in the spring of 1946 marks the precise moment at which Williams's popular homegrown American image cohered. After World War II, "Doc Williams" came to be seen as a kind of latter-day Walt Whitman bravely setting out to write a new American epic. Thus Bishop's reception and the "small" terms in which it was couched were unavoidably connected with Williams's new status as pre-eminent national (or nationalist) poet writing a huge American poem, and her work stood counter not only to Williams's but also to the remarkable trend toward self-consciously "big" writing in postwar American poetry, a trend Paterson dramatically embodied.

In two high-profile group reviews, comparison of Bishop and Williams resulted in hierarchal assessments of the poets' respective importance to and likely impact on American poetry. Randall Jarrell and Robert Lowell both evaluated Bishop's welcome smallness specifically in contrast to the still more admirable bulk and ambition of *Paterson I*. In a review titled "The Poet and His Public" Jarrell extols Williams's effort at some length. He explains in glowing terms the total coherence of *Paterson I*, in which "Everything . . . is interwoven with everything else" (498). With this monumental work, Williams trounces *The Waste Land* and offers a new model for poetic achievement:

If you want to write a long poem . . . which unifies a dozen [subjects], you can learn a great deal from *Paterson*. But I do not know how important these details of structure will seem to an

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age which regards as a triumph of organization that throwing-out-of-blocks-upon-the-nursery-floor which concludes *The Waste Land*. (494)

In Jarrell's terms, the juvenile *Waste Land* has been superseded by the mature *Paterson I*, a truly adult, manly poem. Jarrell concludes with what he means as an unqualified compliment: "There has never been a poem more American." He leaves *Paterson I* only "unwillingly" to turn to *North & South*, and he rates the "best poems" in Bishop's volume "so good that it takes a geological event like *Paterson* to overshadow them" (498).

If Jarrell was one of the most influential American critics of poetry after World War II, Lowell was certainly the biggest name among younger American poets. His 1946 volume Lord Weary's Castle won the Pulitzer Prize over both North & South and Paterson I in 1947. When Lowell turns to Bishop in his group notice in Sewanee Review, his first priority is to locate where she stands in the poetry scene:

To some readers, and to all readers at first, [the poems'] inspiration will appear comparatively modest. Her admirers are not likely to hail her as a giant among the moderns, or to compare anything that she will ever write with Shakespeare or Donne. Nevertheless, the splendor and minuteness of her descriptions soon seem wonderful. (496–97)

Lowell next takes up *Paterson I*. With an appreciative nod to Jarrell's review, Lowell describes Williams's work as the most "important" book of 1946. In fact no "living English or American poet . . . has written anything better or more ambitious" (500). While Bishop will not be compared to past or present "giants," *Paterson I* bests Ezra Pound's *Cantos* and Hart Crane's *The Bridge*, and can stand too with those eminences of modern poetry: Eliot, W. H. Auden, and Wallace Stevens. In sum, if the ensuing pieces of Williams's opus "are as good as Part I, *Paterson* will be the most successful really long poem since *The Prelude*" (503).

Along with the penchant for establishing competitive rankings of male poetic achievements, Lowell's and Jarrell's reviews of Bishop and Williams share similar descriptive metaphors. First, Jarrell likens *Paterson* to a "geological event." Lowell classifies Bishop as not "a giant among the moderns." These poet-critics thus take *Paterson* on its own terms: Jarrell's description effectively adapts Williams's presentation of "Mr. Paterson" as an unavoidable and dramatic geological formation; Lowell's image cor-

roborates the self-reflexive subtitle of Paterson I, The Delineaments of the Giants. Further, these images of huge size and force describe and endorse what can be broadly identified as a predominant trend of masculine gigantism in American poetry just after World War II. By way of illustration, think only of the remarkable group of pronouncedly "major" long poems published in the late 1940s and early 1950s: Williams's Paterson I, II, III, and IV (1946, 1948, 1949, 1951), Auden's Age of Anxiety (1947), Stevens's Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction (first published in 1942, reprinted at the end of Transport to Summer in 1947), and Pound's Pisan Cantos (1948)—all wildly different poems, but all long and therefore, it would seem, manifestly important poems.

Long poems exacerbate many of the challenges that poetry critics and reviewers face, among them how to avoid the dreaded reductive summary. Excerption provides one imperfect solution. Both Lowell and Jarrell fret over their obligation to select bits of *Paterson I* before resigning themselves to it. Lowell regrets that the necessity of excerpting risks damaging his claim that the "whole" of *Paterson I* has "a unity that is analogous to the dramatic unities of time, place, and action" (503). Jarrell laments that he must write a

little review . . . instead of going over it page by page, explaining and admiring. And one hates to quote too much, since the beauty, delicacy, and intelligence of the best parts depend so much upon their organization in the whole. (493)

Still, since they cannot reproduce that marvelous "whole," Jarrell and Lowell both focus on parts of it. They proffer short pieces that somehow contain *Paterson* or exemplify Williams's central figurative consolidation of a nation into a man, the Americanness of his poem, its force. Both poetcritics in turn cite Williams's "Geographic picture" lyric as emblematic of the larger themes and aims of *Paterson*. Here is Lowell: "The three-fold main-theme is repeated in smaller themes, such as the African chief with his seven [sic] wives on a log, and 'the lightnings that stab at the mystery of a man from both ends" (502). And here is Jarrell:

The speech of sexual understanding, of natural love, is represented by three beautifully developed themes: a photograph of the nine wives of a Negro chief; a tree standing on the brink of the waterfall; and two lovers talking by the river. (496)

Thus the two most prominent joint reviews of North & South and Paterson I highlighted Williams's "Geographic picture" lyric. 10 Twenty-five years later, Bishop would make the same excerption in "In the Waiting Room." Her narrative of a frightened young girl, however, cannot be made to harmonize with the forceful "whole" of Paterson I.

A final note about the larger stakes of the atmosphere into which Bishop's North & South and Williams's Paterson I entered in 1946: debate about the successes or failures of Paterson and its cohort of late-1940s long poems aside, high regard for the genre of the "giant" poem has proven a remarkably durable, if tautological, standard for evaluation of the import of poetic works. Even those who regard Bishop as a major poet often credit the size distinction. In the years following Bishop's death in 1979, James Merrill described his alarm at his own gravitation toward the genre of the long poem as opposed in particular to the distinctive, small, or curious poems of Bishop, his model poet. As his poems got bigger, Merrill kept "clinging to the idea of Elizabeth with her sanity and level-headedness and quirkiness of mind" as a sort of check against

the male giants—Eliot, Pound, Wallace Stevens—who seem in their life's work to transcend human dimensions; somehow wondering whether the light that philosophy casts made a greater shadow on the wall behind them. (22–23)

Elsewhere Merrill included both Williams and Lowell in the group of male poets whose work makes a "monument" of its writer (351). Even favorable comparisons like Merrill's maintain a sharp distinction between Bishop's relatively small oeuvre made up of relatively small poems and the determinedly major efforts of her male contemporaries and predecessors. The immediate consolidation of Bishop's reputation for modesty in 1946 is accurate only if one regards the literally large poem as the standard for literary boldness. Blunt as they are, such binaries of midcentury criticism—small woman poet, "male giant" poet; small poem, book-length poem; junior writer, senior writer—informed a general unwillingness to see Bishop not only as a welcome alternative to dominant poetic trends like gigantism or, later in her career, confessional poetry, but also as actively responding in her work to the shape and scope of post—World War II poetics.

Williams in "In the Waiting Room"

In "In the Waiting Room," Bishop depicts a young girl whose reading of National Geographic prompts her first recognition of her unique—and specifically female—identity. As the girl reads, the adult speaker returns to the same lyric excerpt as Jarrell and Lowell. The "grown-up" poet reads Williams's "Geographic picture" lyric, the poetic paradigm of the National Geographic—as-permissible—pornography joke. "In the Waiting Room" offers neither straight recitation nor simple refutation of the "Geographic" moment in Paterson. Instead, Bishop's allusion participates in her self-conscious rereading of herself in "In the Waiting Room"—or of the stereotypes of her poetics that congealed immediately on publication of North & South, partly under the shadow of Paterson I. Bishop's allusion to Williams facilitates her reading of her own place in the poetic milieu of the late twentieth century.

"In the Waiting Room" relies throughout on deft telescoping of chronology. The mature speaker quietly infuses her childhood anecdote with her adult perspective. Bishop's pronunciation of her own name provides the clearest mark of this. At the same moment when the child protagonist realizes, apparently for the first time in her life, that she is "an Elizabeth" (160), the "grown-up" poet signs her proper name, "Elizabeth," for the first time in a poem. As the child begins to recognize and react to the fact of her distinct identity, the adult speaker comments on her acquired persona. As we have seen, well before the late 1960s, when Bishop wrote "In the Waiting Room," the idea that her work was characterized chiefly by modesty and truthful precision—mutually implicated aspects of Bishop's poetic persona—was a truism waiting to be challenged. Bishop would signal her own reflection on her career with the title of her third and final book, Geography III (1976). The title effectively applied retroactive subtitles—Geography I and Geography II—to her first two full-length volumes, North & South and Questions of Travel. 13 In keeping with this retrospective consolidation of her poetic career, Bishop placed "In the Waiting Room" first in Geography III. The opening poem of her culminating volume recalls the child's dawning awareness of her identity and revisits the charged moment at which the adult Bishop's poetic persona began to cohere.

In the opening stanza of "In the Waiting Room" the reading girl moves from curiosity to embarrassment, even as the adult reading over

her shoulder moves imperceptibly from apparently factual description to fictional invention. These procedural shifts undermine what were the central elements of Bishop's reputation: modesty and accuracy. The poem begins with a circumstantial, list-driven narration of how the child Elizabeth came to be reading the *National Geographic* just before her seventh birthday. Details of location, occasion, and setting occupy most of the stanza:

In Worcester, Massachusetts,
I went with Aunt Consuelo
to keep her dentist's appointment
and sat and waited for her
in the dentist's waiting room.
It was winter. It got dark
early. The waiting room
was full of grown-up people,
arctics and overcoats,
lamps and magazines.

These opening lines establish the unhurried presentation of apparently factual material detail.

The listlike evocation of scene continues into the second half of the stanza, where Bishop provides a formal catalogue, introduced with a colon, of some half-dozen pictures the child sees in *National Geographic*.

Tellingly, it is unclear exactly how many photographs the child "carefully / studied," and thus the illusion of narrative clarity and bullet-pointed factuality begins to unravel even before the obvious moment of crisis. Elizabeth looks at pictures of (1) a quiet volcano, (2) the volcano erupting, (3) anthropologists "Osa and Martin Johnson," and (4) a cannibal meal. Finally, she sees either one or two more photographs:

Babies with pointed heads wound round and round with string; black, naked women with necks wound round and round with wire like the necks of light bulbs.

Their breasts were horrifying.

The image of "black, naked women" triggers the girl's dizzying, "horrifying" recognition of her own female identity. Indeed the image of topless

African women sparks the girl's only affective response in this stanza of list-making. Emotion—in the form of horror—arises only after the first poetic figure in this patently prosy poem. Feeling is engendered by poetic making. But the speaker records even that emotional reaction with passive syntax: not "I was horrified" but "Their breasts were horrifying." The pace picks up after the vision of the "horrifying" breasts, the syntactic acceleration extending the child's emotional response into the following lines. The adult "I" who earlier points out, proudly in parentheses, that "I could read" concludes the first stanza with the child's retreat to the illusory reassurance of the iconic *National Geographic*:

I read it right straight through I was too shy to stop. And then I looked at the cover: The yellow margins, the date.

If "In the Waiting Room" begins with a curious young female poet being made to be modest, the impression of modesty is belied by the adult Bishop's echo of Williams's 1946 lyric. But to suggest that Bishop responds to Williams in "In the Waiting Room" is to suggest an uncharacteristically immodest allusion only if our notion of Bishop's modesty precludes us from regarding her as engaged in critical debate about the size, shape, and direction of twentieth-century American poetry, her own included. Bishop's mode or subject of allusion ultimately acknowledges and rejects the assumption of her modesty. In her hands, *National Geographic* is at once a most recognizable popular image and a most salient piece of *Paterson I*. Bishop's method of citing Williams, under "cover" of the magazine, recovers for today's readers a sense of her poetic engagement, her discreet and canny boldness.

Coda: "In the Waiting Room"

in The New Yorker, 1971

This essay has countered the assumption that Bishop's "National Geographic, / February, 1918" refers exclusively to a phantom archival magazine available for fact-checking. Through juxtaposition and relevant publication history, I have suggested that we read Bishop's magazine as a metonym for another source text. I conclude here with an expansion of this intertextual approach.

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In the final stanza of "In the Waiting Room," Bishop reiterates the historical setting of her childhood memory:

Then I was back in it. The War was on. Outside, in Worcester, Massachusetts were night and slush and cold, and it was still the fifth of February, 1918.

Here Bishop's first and only explicit mention of the war replaces *National Geographic* as the specific referent for the date. Her otherwise needless reiteration of the month and year emphasizes that the summary line—"The War was on. Outside"—applies equally to early 1918, the time of the poem's setting, and the late 1960s, the time of its composition. A half-century after the poem is set, it was "still" wartime.

Strangely with respect to a poem so concerned with what is inside or outside the self (or itself), much attention has been paid to the magazine inside the poem, little to the magazine as it were "outside" of it: the 17 July 1971 issue of The New Yorker in which "In the Waiting Room" first appeared.14 It was in the Vietnam-era New Yorker that Bishop first published the anecdotal poem about reading another magazine, National Geographic, during another war, the First World War. To revisit the appearance of "In the Waiting Room" in The New Yorker is to underscore the connection Bishop makes between the war during which the poem is set and the war that raged while she was writing it. For the implicit timeliness of Bishop's explicitly historical poem escaped neither its original publishers nor, one can guess, its first readers. The New Yorker bought "In the Waiting Room" in June 1970.15 When the magazine printed the poem over a year later it appeared in an issue that also carried a bleak "Letter from Washington" in which Richard H. Rovere, writing during the "terminal phase, at least as far as [the United States] is concerned" of the protracted "conflict in Indo-China," prognosticated:

There is sure to be bloodletting for years to come—much of it accomplished by foreign ordnance, some of which will be ours—but the direct American combat role is drawing to an end for the good and sufficient reason that there is practically no one left who can find glory or advantage of any sort in it. (70)

Both "In the Waiting Room" and the "Letter from Washington" are set, so to speak, during the waning years of a war. Rovere's prediction of future violence parallels Bishop's link between the War to End All Wars and the latest mockery of that moniker, the Vietnam War. The publication history of "In the Waiting Room" thus amplifies the poem's concluding comment on the continued, even continuous, violence of the twentieth century. The poem narrates, of course, the first emergence of a child's consciousness of her place in a wider world. But "In the Waiting Room" is also about what the "grown-up" poet has experienced—and what she has read—in that world and between its wars, both military and poetic.

Notes

- 1. See her 30 August 1967 letter to Robert Lowell (qtd. in Millier 394) and her 27 July 1971 letter to Frank Bidart (*One Art* 545–46). She also acknowledged her inaccuracy without prompting in a 1977 interview with George Starbuck (317–18).
- 2. For two particularly interesting readings of Bishop's "photographs" of African women, see Carol E. Miller and Corinne E. Blackmer. Miller posits Bishop's invented photographic content as evidence of the poet's equivocal position on American imperialism, Blackmer as evidence of Bishop's lesbian identity and poetics.
- 3. In an inventive reading of Bishop's policy of indirection in "In the Waiting Room," Marjorie Levinson argues that the poet collages several photographs from various roughly contemporaneous issues of *National Geographic*. These composite images in turn acquire "the authority of absolute fact" for Bishop (212). Levinson reproduces eight plausible source images: five from the October 1919 issue of *National Geographic* and three (of pigs) from the February 1918 issue (220–25).
- 4. Scholars such as Stephen Gould Axelrod, Margaret Dickie, Betsy Erkkila, John Lowney, John Palattella, and Camille Roman have substantially revised the mistaken sense of Bishop's disengagement from Cold War–era politics. My argument that she participated in her more outspoken colleagues' politically charged debates about poetry is indebted to them.
- 5. I borrow the aptly equivocal term response from Lee Edelman's touchstone 1985 reading of "In the Waiting Room." There Edelman observes that "perusal of National Geographic constitutes . . . a topos of sexual curiosity" in literature from the 1910s through the 1960s. He notes that the magazine "played a significant role in the satisfaction of voyeuristic desires (primarily those of men)"

and posits Williams's *Paterson I* as an "important literary instance of this topos." He concludes with the observation that Bishop "responds to Williams's very different reading of the *National Geographic*—and of woman" (194–95n24). An account of the stakes of Bishop's response to Williams, though, lies outside the scope of Edelman's pathbreaking essay on the relation of truth to literality in Bishop's poetics.

- 6. According to a revisionist 1993 study of *National Geographic*, the magazine's ostensibly factual record of breasts had to that point included no white ones and few old ones. In a peculiar application of the magazine's stated editorial principle of timeliness, that record kept rough pace with changing preferences as to shape and size that defined the American breast "fetish" for most of the twentieth century (Lutz and Collins 175).
- 7. National Geographic forms only the most conspicuous piece of Bishop's response to Williams in "In the Waiting Room." The magazine provides an umbrella under which other even more laconic allusions gather. For one example, the perspective of Bishop's poem inverts a strange prose interlude in Paterson I in which a doctor, evidently an obstetrician or pediatrician, stands "in the alcove pretending to wash . . . talking pleasantly the while and with great skill" to an "anxious parent" and ignoring "twenty or more infants" and their "tormented" mothers who wait in his "outer office" (32). For another, Bishop's invented depiction of a cannibal meal ("A dead man slung on a pole / 'Long Pig,' the caption said" [159]) evokes Williams's comment on the academy's numbing effect on local, spirited minds. He wrote of the "university" forcing original American minds to become "spitted on fixed concepts like / roasting hogs, sputtering, their drip sizzling / in the fire" (31–32). Bishop's picture effectively captions and catalogs Williams's oppositional roasting of the international modernist establishment.
- 8. Schwartz and Estess reprint several contemporary reviews of *North & South* (177–93). For example, Marianne Moore titles her review "A Modest Expert" and calls Bishop "spectacular in being unspectacular" (177); Randall Jarrell describes Bishop's work as "attractively and unassumingly good . . . but simpler and milder" than that of her mentor, Moore (180). Oscar Williams writes of her "fresh unostentation" (184), and Arthur Mizener of how "honestly [Bishop's poems] use, without abusing, the rhetorical resources of verse" (193).
- 9. Albert Gelpi describes how as Ezra Pound came

to veer dangerously toward insane or criminal behavior ... [Williams,] Pound's life-long friend ... took on something of the venerable, lovable aura of Whitman: the American bard as doctor and healer, as cultural wound dresser. (321)

10. Bishop wrote her first letter to Lowell, in part to thank him for his "giant among the moderns" review of North & South, on 14 August 1947. In that letter she damns Paterson I with faint praise. Though she has not read Williams's poem, Lowell's "review is the first one that has made me feel I must" (One Art 146). And she did. When she wrote to Lowell the following summer, she tactfully distinguished between her appreciation of the "awfully good job" Lowell had done in "presenting" Paterson II in a review and her dislike, despite some "wonderful sections," of Williams's latest installment itself. She located her aversion to Paterson in what she termed its "streak of insensitivity." Specifically. she could not abide Williams's quotation from poet Marcia Nardi's anguished letters, a practice inaugurated in the very first prose interlude of Paterson I. To Bishop, the transcription of passages from private correspondence "seems mean" and fails as a poetic device anyway, for the letters are "much too overpowering emotionally for the rest of it so that the whole poem suffers." What's more, she identifies with Nardi, having "felt a little too much the way the woman did at certain more hysterical moments—people who haven't experienced absolute loneliness for long stretches of time can never sympathize with it at all" (159). (Her disapproval of Williams's use of Nardi's letters eerily anticipates, of course, her urgent reaction to Lowell's transcriptions of Elizabeth Hardwick's correspondence in The Dolphin [1972].)

Williams, for his part, seems to have paid little attention to Bishop. In a posthumously published review of Edmund Wilson's poetry supplement to the 21 April 1941 *New Republic*, he writes:

there are three groups of poems, by Elizabeth Bishop, Rolph Humphries, and Randall Jarrell which, I believe, [Wilson] selected . . . because of formal qualities he thought significant in themselves. This pleases me immensely no matter what I may happen to think of the poems themselves. (Something to Say 113)

He elaborates only on Jarrell.

11. In 1966 Ashley Brown asked Bishop to comment on Eliot's and Auden's long poems of the 1940s and whether a poet needs a myth "to sustain his work." Bishop politely obliged, then concluded: "The question, I must admit, doesn't interest me a great deal. I'm not interested in big-scale work as such. Something needn't be large to be good" (295). In the 1977 interview with George Starbuck cited above, Bishop said, "I wish I had written a great deal more [poems]. Sometimes I think if I had been a man I probably would have written more. Dared more, or been able to spend more time at it." Starbuck followed up first by asking if she would have written in other genres (answer:

no), then if she would have written long poems. Bishop replied that there were "One or two long poems I'd like to write, but I doubt that I ever shall. Well, not really long. Maybe ten pages. That'd be long" (329–30). In the same interview, Bishop recounts that "a young woman who is editing Williams's letters sent me a copy a month or so ago of . . . a letter from Williams" about a reading he did with Marianne Moore, which Bishop attended. "And it says 'Marianne Moore had a little girl named Elizabeth Bishop in tow. It seems she writes poetry.' Something like that. Of course I never knew Dr. Williams very well" (327–28).

12. Millier writes that Elizabeth in the poem identifies "with womanly pain, the impossibly conflicted life a self-aware woman must lead." Millier locates in the poem an "ambivalence about the value of femininity" that affected Bishop's thinking about herself, her sexual orientation, and her poems (27).

13. In his 1977 review of *Geography III*, John Hollander was the first to underscore the reflective significance of the title of Bishop's last book:

The radical invention of a figurative geography of North & South, the mapping of personal history implicit there, are perhaps Miss Bishop's Geography I... Questions of Travel is thus, perhaps, her Geography II. (245)

14. This oversight might owe in part to the fact that all 10 of the *Geography III* poems were first published in *The New Yorker*. Bishop signed her initial first-read contract with *The New Yorker* in the fall of 1946, just after the publication of *North & South*. From 1947 on, most of her poems were published in *The New Yorker* "even while she made almost constant fun of the magazine's conservative editorial policy" (Millier 188).

15. On 17 June 1970 Bishop wrote to Dr. Anny Baumann of "In the Waiting Room": "I've also just sold *The New Yorker* the first poem I have been able to finish in over three years." In the same paragraph she mentions that she is "now the poetry critic for *The New Yorker*" (*One Art* 528). Bishop took over the job after the death of Louise Bogan in 1970, but never produced any review for publication (Millier 424–25).

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Rodney Stenning Edgecombe

Unless we are dealing with embedded quotations of unquestionable provenance, there is a sense in which literary allusions are illusions, since, like that most celebrated of illusions, the rainbow, a good few of them are a function of vantage. People located at different points on a rainy landscape are likely to see (a) nothing at all, (b) a partial rainbow, (c) a rainbow in the form of a perfect arc, (d) an inverted secondary rainbow alongside it, or (e)—rarely—a number of supernumerary rainbows within it. By the same token, the literary baggage that individual readers bring to a work will issue in corresponding experiences: no echo at all; the faint suggestion of an echo; an unequivocal echo; an echo that sets off another; and, in some rare instances, an echo that reduplicates itself through a whole literary landscape. Philip Larkin received a thorough grounding in classical English literature as an undergraduate at Oxford, and while the (slightly juvenile) comments he penciled into the St. John's College library Spenser suggest that he received it with some reluctance, his firstclass result suggests that he received it even so. His acquaintance with all the major poets of the eighteenth century, and a good few of the second rank to boot, is therefore a matter of public record; whether they echo in "Sad Steps" to the extent that I shall claim is ultimately a question of where we situate ourselves.

Writing to Monica Jones in 1971, Larkin remarked that "every writer has a book he wants to re-write (Dylan Thomas said his was *The Pilgrim's Progress*): mine is 'The Seasons'" (qtd. in Motion, *Writer's Life* 415). Such a project might seem at first blush to be at odds with the poet's famous critique of allusiveness, his disavowal of the "anxiety of influence":

As a guiding principle I believe that every poem must be its own sole freshly created universe, and therefore have no belief in "tradition" or a common myth-kitty or casual allusions in poems to other poems or poets, which last I find unpleasantly like the talk of literary understrappers letting you see they know the right people. (273)

This anxiety might be suppressed, of course, but it can never be evaded, for just as Edward Young acknowledges the interinvolvement of the dead and the living—"From human mould we reap our daily bread" (119)—so too almost every word and permutation of words in the language carries its freight of allusion and adaptation. The very fact that Larkin entertained thoughts of rewriting *The Seasons* confirms this. Had the project ever been realized, he would probably have repainted Thomson's varnished Claudian landscapes in the manner of Hitchens or Nash, and replaced his magniloquence with reserve, but his source would have remained there as the unnegotiable substrate of the enterprise.

As it happens, Larkin did redraft, if not a specific Augustan text, then certainly a form with close connections to the period, and it is to this, the meditative night piece, that I propose to relate "Sad Steps." Although the latter's title directs us to a sonnet from Astrophel and Stella, Sidney is only tangentially present in the poem, though in three distinct ways. His first and chief purpose is to have furnished a pathetic fallacy that bridges the divide between the earth and the moon. Secondly, he seems also to have prompted the shape of "Sad Steps," which takes the form an amplified Italian sonnet with a 12-line "first position" instead of the customary octave, and, after the volta centered on the negative in line 12, a sestet into which the tercets slot themselves comfortably, having earlier suggested the halt cautiousness of the author's passage—first step, second step, pause; first step, second step, pause—to the lavatory and back. Initially he makes this passage in the dark to keep tenuous contact with sleep, but severs it when he parts his bedroom curtains, revealing not the "sad steps" of Sidney's moon (projected as a Petrarchan lover) but rather the flash of a sprinter-"The way the moon dashes through the clouds that blow." Those steps are accordingly appropriated to the aging speaker, who, unlike Sidney, entertains no love (philia) of heavenly bodies (astri) because he knows it to be illusory. At the same time, the crabbed, broken terzine, in addition to representing the speaker's nonce blindness ("groping"), also turn into

the "sad steps" of the internal éclaircissement mapped out in the rest of the poem. The rhyme scheme underscores this by avoiding the forward momentum of terza rima (more usually favored for three-line units), redoubling on itself and seeming to scratch its head in bafflement (aba bba aba bba). If we compare "Sad Steps" with a similar sonetto ingrandimento ("For Sidney Bechet"), the purpose of this redoubling becomes apparent. In the earlier poem, the terzine rhyme in the usual "Adam's rib" manner (aba bcb etc.) because the memory gratefully and effortlessly penetrates the past instead of confronting an immutable and narrowing future. In contrast, the redisposition of the terzina rhymes in "Sad Steps" conveys the shuffling caution of a speaker prematurely old and unable to pass the night without passing water.

A third (more equivocal) imprint that Sidney leaves on the poem can be found, perhaps, in various associations triggered by the shape of the wedgy shadows. If we recall that the relevant sonnet from Astrophel and Stella projects the moon as a victim of the god of love ("What, may it be that even in heavenly place / That busy archer his sharp arrows tries?" [Ault 96]), the "wedge-shadowed gardens" could hint at Cupid's arrows, suggesting that, like the Dockery in Larkin's account of a college reunion, their owners have wedded in hope of being "added to" (109) and now conduct those augmentations in terrace houses. The cuneiform shadows of their gables (cast by blade-like roof ridges, whose angles have been sharpened, as on a whetstone, by the "stone-coloured light") recall both the shapes of arrowheads and Damoclean wedges, ready to prise apart the couples in death. Larkin enhances this intimation of mortality through the sepulchral hint in the color-chart signification of "stone" (one of the trendy gradations of white like "champagne" or "oyster"). The poised three-sided shadows also stir memories of Hamlet's "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" (3.1.58) and the random broadcast of weapon and lyric in Longfellow's "Arrow and the Song" ("I shot an arrow in the air" [270]). Larkin had already picked up and amplified the latter poem in "Whitsun Weddings," where he compounded it with the Agincourt shower in Olivier's Henry V: "there swelled / A sense of falling, like an arrow-shower / Sent out of sight, somewhere becoming rain" (94).

Such shafts are wounding, of course, and the arrow rain in "Whitsun Weddings" is double edged, figuring also as the penetrating phallus, an object of violence: "girls, gripping their handbags tighter, stared / At a

religious wounding" (93). For this Larkin might have been indebted both to Bernini's sculpture and Crashaw's "Hymn to Sainte Teresa":

How kindly will thy gentle HEART Kisse the sweetly-killing DART! And close in those embraces keep Those delicious Wounds, that weep Balsome to heal themselves with. (56)

This train of echoes suggests that the signification of the "wedge-shadowed gardens" is at best ambivalent and, at worst, entirely sinister. The hortus conclusus, traditional image of safe inviolability, here lies open to heavens that Larkin presents as a rib cage stripped bare by a predator ("Under a cavernous, a wind-picked sky"). Death, in other words, cleanses to reveal. For as surely as they have suffered "religious woundings" from the arrows of Eros, the terrace dwellers will, to a person, fall to the darts of Mors. It's worth recalling in this regard that the "stimulus" in the Vulgate's translation of 1 Cor. 15.55—"ubi est, mors, stimulus tuus"—can be translated as a "goad" or "pointed stake" (both with wedge-shaped extremities) as well as a "sting." Extinction will tidy away the mess that springs from the human drive toward contact and increase.

I find it significant, therefore, that the minatory "wedge-shaped shadows"—half Cupid's arrow, half dart of Mors—imply a moon whose antiseptic "cleanliness" offsets the spherical porcelain into which Larkin has just drizzled his urine. The cityscape it reveals is not only shadowy but also, by implication, polluted—a nuance enhanced by the abrupt, coloned notation of time. Larkin's debt to Eliot can be gauged by comparing the soiled cityscape of "Preludes" ("Six o'clock. / The burnt-out ends of smoky days" [22]) with "Four o'clock: wedge-shadowed gardens lie / Under a cavernous, a wind-picked sky." Once again, Larkin cannot evade the allusive burden of the past, in spite of his truculent disavowal of modernism-and of aspirant romanticism. For in addition to this hint of Eliot there is also, in the sudden incursion of vision on a subdued and steady grief, a reminiscence of Wordsworth's "Surprised by joy, impatient as the wind": "I part thick curtains, and am startled by / The rapid clouds, the moon's cleanliness" (204). "Cleanliness" differs from "cleanness" by being habitual, and Larkin implies that the moon, given the Teflon inviolability of its immutable selfhood, will shed whatever symboliste cobwebs and rhetorical dust have been thrown its way. Yet again, the opposition of

purity and corruption here resonates with earlier poems that stress the divide between a soiled human landscape and the superhuman chastity of the sky above. Milton's ode "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" is a case in point—

Only with speeches fair
She woos the gentle Air
To hide her guilty front with innocent Snow,
And on her naked shame,
Pollute with sinful blame,
The Saintly Veil of Maiden white to throw,
Confounded, that her Maker's eyes
Should look so near upon her foul deformities. (44)

—and so is Keats's last sonnet:

Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
Like nature's patient, sleepless Eremite,
The moving waters at their priestlike task
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores. (372)

This opposition of human mess and unalterable purity correlates with that of the ephemeral and the eternal, something that Keats had dramatized in a night piece of sorts: "then on the shore / Of the wide world I stand alone, and think / Till love and fame to nothingness do sink" (366). The same antithesis also subtends "Sad Steps," and can be traced back through Keats to the Augustans. Which brings me back to my chief concern in this essay. A decade before "Sad Steps," Larkin's "An Arundel Tomb" issued in what Motion describes as "Augustan wisdom arising from a part-medieval, part nineteenth-century monument" (Writer's Life 274). One needs slightly to qualify Motion's claim, perhaps, for the Augustanism springs from the sense of serene lapidary assertion rather than from the maxim itself. "What will survive of us is love," far from being a typical eighteenth-century posture (Gray meant something altogether different when he wrote that "Ev'n in our ashes live their wonted fires" [134]), distills instead the plot of Giselle, an archetypal romantic ballet. But in other respects "An Arundel Tomb," like "Sad Steps" after it, owes a debt to the eighteenth century. Meditations about or among tombs are not specific to that era, of course, and one could trace an intermittent

genealogy of the form from Catullus ("Multas per gentes et multa per aequora vectus" [172]) through Wilde's sonnets at the graves of Shelley and Keats to Alan Tate's "Ode to the Confederate Dead" and Lowell's "Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket."

That genealogy notwithstanding, there can be no doubt that the thanatopsis came into its own at the hands of Augustan poets and those in the Age of Sensibility. The most famous of all, Gray's "Elegy," had precedents in Edward Young's Night Thoughts, published, like Blair's "Grave," a few years earlier, in Thomas Parnell's "Night-Piece on Death," and in the Countess of Winchilsea's "Nocturnal Rêverie," which preceded those three by almost a decade. All of them begin with évocations poétiques of the night, move through passages of discursive meditation, and eventually take up a moral stance. The Countess contents herself with contemptus mundi—

Till the free Soul to compos'dness charm'd,
Finding the Elements of Rage disarm'd,
O'er all below a solemn Quiet grown,
Joys in the' inferiour World and thinks it like her Own:
In such a Night let Me abroad remain,
Till Morning breaks, and All's confus'd again;
Our Cares, our Toils, our Clamours are renew'd,
Or Pleasures, seldom reach'd, again pursu'd. (Peake 40)

-while Parnell invokes the memento mori-

The Marble Tombs that rise on high, Whose Dead in vaulted Arches lye, Whose Pillars swell with sculptur'd Stones, Arms, Angels, Epitaphs, and Bones, These (all the poor Remains of state) Adorn the Rich, or praise the Great; Who while on Earth in Fame they live, Are sensless of the Fame they give.

Ha! While I gaze, pale Cynthia fades, The bursting Earth unveils the Shades! All slow, and wan, and wrap'd with Shrouds, They rise in visionary Crouds, Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennai and eGangotri Larkin's "Sad Steps" and the Augustan Night Piece

And all with sober Accent cry,

Think, Mortal, what it is to dye. (Peake 83–84)

—and Gray provides a sonorous compound of both:

Nor you, ye Proud, impute to these the fault If Memory o'er their tomb no trophies raise, Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.

Can storied urn or animated bust
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
Or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of Death? (124-25)

The moral authority of these speakers is validated—perhaps even created—by a nocturnal context that sets them apart from the run of sleeping humanity. Their vigilance, conceived as something both privileged and deprived, harks back to Donne's "Nocturnal upon S. Lucy's Day, being the shortest day"—

But I am none; nor will my sun renew. You lovers, for whose sake, the lesser sun At this time to the Goat is run To fetch new lust, and give it you, Enjoy your summer all (73)

—and also looks forward to the figure of the romantic isolato in such poems as "When I Have Fears." In both of the preceding instances, however, one senses a nullity absent from the Augustan thanatopsis, for even in the gloomiest of these—Night Thoughts—the poet's Christianity underpins the enterprise, diluting the horror and vacuity that Young otherwise strives so hard to impress upon his readers:

LORENZO! Since Eternal is at hand To swallow Time's ambitions, as the vast Leviathan, the bubbles vain that ride High on the foaming billow; what avail High titles, high descent, attainments high, If unattain'd our highest? (114)

Such images of engulfment, far from instilling terror, ultimately spring from a comforting matrix (the belly of the whale, traditional type of the resurrection), and the poet chooses not to threaten the reader with eternity (sinister cousin of Shakespeare's "all-oblivious enmity" [Sonnets 30]) but rather a personified "Eternal," the "Ancient of days" (Dan. 7.9) in Augustan costume.

The crucial element in the night piece is the vigilance of the poet who surveys the sleeping world and articulates the values of the darkness. That, too, sounds an additional note of comfort, for a half-acknowledged assumption beneath all these works is that the speaker who stands guard over a sleeping world becomes a surrogate deity: "Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Ps. 121.4). And lodged in that assumption of a *deus vigilans* is the related idea of the *deus reificans* (to coin a phrase) who confers existence, à la Berkeley, by observation. This epistemological securement of ontology is implied in Gray's "Elegy":

Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear:
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
And waste its fragrance on the desert air. (127)

A further moral authority is conferred on the waking speaker by our sense of his or her self-denial. Vigils have a time-honoured religious sanction both pagan (the *Pervigilium Veneris*) and Christian (Jesus's in Gethsemane and the fathers' in the desert). In the last instance, indeed, wakefulness became a kind of mortification, the signature of values displaced from the here and now to a suppositious future. Young in fact directs his night thoughts along this channel, diverting them from worldly ambition to a future happiness predicated on its sacrifice. For whereas the Countess of Winchilsea had set up a mild opposition between her nocturne and the disorders and dissatisfactions of the waking world, he proves rather more vehement and, like the Chorus in Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, tastes "the savour of putrid flesh in the spoon" (269):

LORENZO! such the glories of the world!
What is the world itself? Thy world?—A grave.
Where is all the dust that has not been alive?
The spade, the plough, disturb our ancestors;
From human mould we reap our daily bread. (Young 119)

Not only does Young devalue the material world but he also scales down the universe itself in relation to his deity:

Though Night unnumber'd worlds unfolds to view, Boundless Creation! What art thou? A beam, A mere effluvium of His majesty. And shall an atom of this atom-world Mutter, in dust and sin, the theme of Heaven? (92)

Such scalings down are a function of the Augustan delight in taking Olympian pan shots of human experience. Johnson's proem to "The Vanity of Human Wishes"—"Let Observation, with extensive view, / Survey mankind from China to Peru" (Dixon and Grierson 217)—clearly has its source in the extraplanetary hoverings of Young:

Half round the globe, the tears pump'd up by Death Are spent in watering vanities of life (99)

These, then, are some of the eighteenth-century precedents for "Sad Steps." However, while it shares with them a conspectual sweep of vision and a lamentation about the frailty of human effort, it arrives at totally different conclusions. Far from finding comfort beyond the grave as his Augustan predecessors do, Larkin can offer as solace only his steady gaze at things this side of death. Even so, the structural outline of the night piece—evocative nocturne yielding to commentary—has left its imprint on "Sad Steps." The panorama implied by "wedge-shadowed gardens lie / Under a cavernous, a wind-picked sky" has a largesse more indebted to the proem of "The Vanity of Human Wishes" and Young's vista "Half round the globe" than it does to the actual view from Larkin's flat in Pearson Park. The Local Studies Library of Kingston upon Hull, in answer to a query about the elevation of this view, told me that "Hull is very flat and low, there are no real high points in it and both of Larkin's homes were not on high ground" (e-mail to the author, 29 July 2007). So the actual view of "Sad Steps" is, as it were, amplified by the grander conspectuses of the Augustan poems that have fed into it.

There are other points of connection as well. In the eighteenth-century night piece the moon is largely an objective presence. When the owl recites its *planctus* in the "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," it receives no answer: "The moping owl does to the moon complain / Of such as, wandering near her secret bower, / Molest her ancient solitary

reign" (120). Such an absence provides a touchstone for Larkin's attack on the subjective fantasies that have been spun around the moon. To take a random sample, there is Sidney's fellow-feeling moon, Shelley's self-mirroring, disaffected romantic avatar—

Art thou pale for weariness
Of climbing Heaven, and gazing on the earth,
Wandering companionless
Among the stars that have a different birth,—
And ever changing, like a joyless eye
That finds no object worth its constancy (124)

—and the cosy, intimiste evocation of Hans Andersen's in "What the Moon Saw"—

I saw a face I knew, a round friendly face, my best friend at home. It was the moon, dear old moon, unchanged, and looking exactly the same as he used to look, when he peeped at me there through the willows in the marshes. (173–74)

—the last image comparable in its bonhomie to T. E. Hulme's in "Autumn"—

I walked abroad, And saw the ruddy moon lean over a hedge Like a red-faced farmer. I did not speak, but nodded (Roberts 70)

Wordsworth's vision of the moon in "Night-piece," written in 1798 at the tail-end of the tradition, is somewhat closer to Larkin's. Like his, Wordsworth's poem centers on revelatory tableaux:

At length a pleasant instantaneous gleam
Startles the pensive traveller while he treads
His lonesome path, with unobserving eye
Bent earthwards; he looks up—the clouds are split
Asunder,—and above his head he sees
The clear Moon, and the glory of the heavens.
There in the blue-black vault she sails along,
Followed by multitudes of stars, that, small
And sharp and bright, along the dark abyss

Drive as she drives: how fast they wheel away, Yet vanish not!—the wind is in the tree, But they are silent;—still they roll along Immeasurably distant; and the vault, Built round by those white clouds, enormous clouds, Still deepens its unfathomable depth. (146)

Just as this revelation of the moon prompts Wordsworth to "peaceful calm" and musings "upon the solemn scene," so too does its disclosure direct Larkin's sad steps in the direction of a comparable calm. But not before he has cleared the air with satire, directed above all at emotional and verbal bombast. While he clearly applauded the Augustans for the sharp analytic vision they brought to their record of the natural world (as witness his attraction to The Seasons), he would have felt less enthusiastic about their segregation of poetic and everyday registers, and the vices fostered by their forgoing, in poetry, "the real language of nature" (Wordsworth, "Preface" 176). One of these—periphrastic phrases like "finny tribe" and "feathered people"—has no bearing on "Sad Steps," but another does, namely the hand-to-forehead, posturing apostrophe that reached a point ne plus ultra in Thomson's Sophonisba: "Oh! Sophonisba! Sophonisba! oh!" (29). Larkin, of course, will have none of this, and his stance of mockery helps to distance and control his use of the night piece even as he invokes it. Instead, for example, of the statuesque syllepsis that diffuses Gray's consciousness through the night ("And leaves the world to darkness and to me" [117]), Larkin begins his poem with a visit to the loo. And the deictic gesture of "There's something laughable about this" encompasses everything that lies ahead, not least the romantic and neoromantic takes on the moon. Here he had the example of Cole Porter's "Love for Sale" to guide him: "Anyone living in the thirties," he remarked, "particularly if they were fond of jazz, learned a great many lyrics of the dance bands of the day, and these were sometimes quite sophisticated if not really poetic" (qtd. in Motion, Writer's Life 22). The song in question offers a sardonic alternative to the lunar raptures of popular song:

When the moon so long has been gazing down On the wayward ways of this wayward town That her smile becomes a smirk (Porter 102)

The reasons for Larkin's own smirk remain as open-ended as the gestural

phrase in which he has lodged the adjective "laughable." Although the strict letter of the syntax attaches it to the "dash" of the moon, the *rire satanique* responds to many things besides.

Indeed, the poet has been so eager to keep things interconnected that he has mispunctuated and, failing to place a comma after the seventh line, allowed the appositive adjectives to qualify the wrong noun ("clouds" instead of "moon"):

There's something laughable about this,
The way the moon dashes through clouds that blow
Loosely as cannon-smoke to stand apart
(stone-coloured light sharpening the roofs below)

High and preposterous and separate—

Various sources have coalesced to produce that apparently arbitrary cannon smoke. In the background, first of all, is the motif of the "Sparkling armadas of promises" (50) in "Next, Please." These, representing the hopes of the "more deceived," attach themselves in turn to a roistering and noisy poem of Larkin's boyhood, Alfred Noyes's "Highwayman":

The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees, The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas (265)

And then, from the imaginary cannon present in the sides of those imaginary ships, a real moon is shot forth like the ball in Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress"—

Let us roll all our strength, and all Our sweetness, up into one Ball: And tear our Pleasures with rough strife, Thorough the Iron gates of Life. (28)

The difference between Marvell's and Larkin's conceits lies in the fact that Larkin's lunar cannonball (which is how some have construed Marvell's rather puzzling sphere), unlike the compacture of the lovers' strength and sweetness, has been trained on illusive pleasures; it doesn't secure them.

Janice Rossen, ignoring the crucial element of mockery, flattens out the complex tone here:

The moon here possesses a mesmerising power. The poet perceives it as:

High and preposterous and separate— Lozenge of love! Medallion of art! O wolves of memory! Immensements!

But he negates this vision immediately by saying "No" and adding that he "shivers slightly, looking up there." He sees the moon as representative of youth and vigour. It symbolises something definite—clear desires and high aims; but it primarily recalls the poet's vast sense of loss. (37–38)

Those odic apostrophes, however, originate not in Larkin's vision of the moon but rather in the illusion that nature involves itself in the course of human affairs. What the moon provisionally symbolizes has less to do with "clear desires and high aims" than with our failure to acknowledge our isolation in the sweep of time and space, and our refuge in beliefs that try to deny it. Seamus Heaney also seems reluctant to admit this:

[Larkin's] vulnerability to desire and hope are transmitted in the Tennysonian cadence of that last line and a half ["wedge-shadowed gardens lie / Under a cavernous, a wind-picked sky"] but suddenly the delved brow tightens—"There's something laughable about this"—only to be tempted again by a dream of fullness, this time in the symbolist transports of language itself—"O wolves of memory, immensements!" But, of course, he finally comes out with a definite, end-stopped "No."Truth wins over beauty by a few points, and while the appeal of the poem lies in its unconsoled clarity about the seasons of ageing, our nature still tends to run to fill that symbolist hole in the middle. (133)

Heaney's "dream of fullness" cannot represent a meaningful plenitude, lacking, as it does, the satiety of Keats's autumnal resignation ("And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core" [213]). Rather it offers the vacuous resonance of an echo chamber: "it is a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing" (Macbeth 5.5.26–28). Even in North Ship, by Larkin's own admission suffused with the garlic-pervasiveness of Yeats, the diction he applies to the moon is utterly unbloated. Lyric 3 might talk

of plenitude, but a plenitude as delicate and composed as a meniscus:

The moon is full tonight
And hurts the eyes,
It is so definite and bright.
What if it has drawn up
All quietude and certitude of worth
Wherewith to fill its cup,
Or mint a second moon, a paradise,
For they are gone from earth. (6)

Being neither gestural nor cloudy, such language owes a primary debt to the discursive lyricism of Matthew Arnold—

The sea is calm to-night,
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits;—on the French coast, the light
Gleams, and is gone; the cliffs of England stand
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay. (181)

—and a secondary one to the quiet fin-de-siècle mannerism of Joyce's Chamber Music—

What counsel has the hooded moon
Put in thy heart, my shyly sweet,
Of love in ancient plenilune,
Glory and stars beneath his feet (332)

—and even to such Whistlerian, protoimagist vignettes as this from Oscar Wilde's "Impressions"—

And suddenly the moon withdraws
Her sickle from the lightening skies,
And to her sombre cavern flies,
Wrapped in a veil of yellow gauze. (771)

Larkin's diction in "quietude and certitude" and "wherewith" is the diction of maniera, not the bluff quotidian grittiness that would become the hallmark of The Movement ("They fuck you up, your mum and dad" [Larkin 142]).

But even in spite of its mannered nature, it differs again from the diction of Victor Hugo's Châtiments, which Anthony Hartley has identified

as a source of discomfiture for English readers (and no doubt for the author of *North Ship* as much as for his later avatar as the hermit of Hull):

this neglect of what the English reader usually regards as the purer poetic elements presents an obstacle which has often led foreign critics to deny French poetry the place in European culture that it deserves. Moreover, we have become unaccustomed to the theatrical side of rhetoric.

Ó drapeaux de Wagram! Ó pays de Voltaire
O banners of Wagram! O country of Voltaire!

sounds uncomfortably like O Sophonisba, Sophonisba O! We can far more easily put up with ten low words creeping in one dull line than we can with this exclamatory inflation. (xv)

As it happens, Thomson's apostrophe to Sophonisba has left its impress on "Sad Steps," its chiastic arch buckling when "No" does service for "O" in the last foot of "O wolves of memory! Immensements! No." This is self-parodying, of course, and Alan Brownjohn is much closer to the mark than either Rossen or Heaney when he characterizes the pseudo-symboliste passage as "pretentious, literary thoughts" (23)—thoughts that, far from being even momentarily entertained, are rejected *ab origine*. The poem's two registers—hard and blurry—are so clear-cut and discrete as to disable any dialogue between them. On just such a dialogue of views much Larkin criticism has turned. Writing about *Jill*, for example, Kingley Amis remarked:

experiences of the hero, John Kemp, in wartime Oxford were instantly attributable to the visible Philip; Kemp's fantasy life, dreamy, romantic, sensitive, seemed the work of a different person. I found them impossible to reconcile—well, so had the author. (4)

And Motion, observing a recurrent tension "between aspiring, elevated cadences on the one hand, and all the 'niggling army of modifiers and qualifiers' on the other" (*Philip Larkin* 37), has related it to "the differences between the empirical mode associated with Hardy and the symbolist mode associated with Yeats" (15).

The flagrancy of the "wolves of memory" and the "immensements" of

youth prevents us from taking them seriously, and, dispensing with them, we also dispense with what they represent. For the wolfish memory of neoromanticism is indeed a foe to humankind ("But keep the wolf far thence, that's foe to men, / Or with his nails he'll dig them up again" [Webster 103–04]), trafficking as it does in an impossible idea of transcendence and courting the despair in which even Wordsworth sensed it would eventuate: "We poets in our youth begin in gladness; / But thereof come in the end despondency and madness" (156). If we take Eichendorff's "Mondnacht" as the paradigm against which "Sad steps" sets itself, we can see that the German poet makes a slippery extrapolation from a subjunctive intercourse of earth and heaven ("hätt") to an indicative flight ("flog") from the one to the other:

Es war, als hätt' der Himmel Die Erde still geküsst, Das sie im Blütenschimmer Von ihm nun träumen müsst'.

Und meine Seele spannte Weit ihre Flügel aus, Flog durch die stillen Lande, Als flöge sie nach Haus.¹ (Fiedler 198)

With such "immensements" Larkin will have no truck. His moon, as we have seen, is more like Cole Porter's smirking presence and the relentless clarifier and separator in Howard Nemerov's "Goose Fish," whose post-coital, unflinching light invades the lovers' illusory paradise:

On the long shore, lit by the moon, To show them properly alone, Two lovers suddenly embraced So that their shadows were as one. The ordinary night was graced For them by the swift tide of blood That silently they took at flood, And for a little time they prized Themselves emparadised.

Then, as if shaken by stage-fright Beneath the hard moon's bony light,

They stood together on the sand Embarrassed in each other's sight (117)

One is tempted indeed to surmise that Larkin half-remembered Nemerov when he phrased his deromanticized vision of moonlight, marrying that in turn with the "universal stare" of the midday sun in Little Dorrit (1): "The hardness and the brightness and the plain / Far-reaching singleness of that wide stare." His corrective vision establishes its authority by renouncing the factitious sublime, the "immensements" he has neologized from the French adverb immensément and turned into a two-a-penny noun. Indeed the diction throughout this tercet carries the seeds of its own dissolution. And one might even see in "immensements" a reductive pun on "immense mints"—mint imperials, the white, moon-like peppermints that teenagers might suck before they fumble their moonlight kisses. Larkin has prepared us for this possibility by invoking the moon as a "Lozenge of love." Taken in conjunction with "Medallion," it offers on one level a dignified architectural series (both being decorative elements in formal buildings), but then "Medallion," no less than "Lozenge," converts at the same time to something less glamorous—a silver medal bouncing on a pimpled chest.

By a similar hologrammatic flick, the reader can turn the belittling adjective "preposterous" into a neutral epithet ("front before back"), one that, instead of mocking the moon, acknowledges its eternal reversal—the fact that it keeps its dark side (an intimation of mortality) forever sealed from gazers on the earth. An extravagant conceit in Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* had presented it as an object to be managed with a lasso and (as it happens) swallowed like a lozenge. As an avid cinema goer in the forties and fifties, Larkin might well have remembered this scene:

What is it you want, Mary? What do you want? You—you want the moon? Just say the word and I'll throw a lasso around it and pull it down. Hey, that's a pretty good idea. I'll give you the moon. . . . Well, then you could swallow it. And it'll all dissolve, see. And the moon beams that shoot out of your fingers and your toes and the ends of your hair. . . . Am I talking too much?

"High and preposterous and apart" is, in effect, Larkin's tart rejoinder to these kinds of flights. The negative particle that straddles the break in the tercets ("Immensements! No") resounds in that spatial vacuum as a cry of *Verneinung*, for like Mephistopheles in *Faust*, Larkin is indeed "der

Geist der stets Verneint" (Goethe 41). His rejection is qualified, however. The palinode of linguistic posturing, whether Petrarchan or neoromantic, amounts to an act of self-liberation.

Motion points out that when Larkin

approached the middle of his life he stopped seeing the conflict as something which must be resolved, and regarded it instead as the means of self-definition. Transcendence was no good: he must accept that failure and success, misery and happiness, confinement and freedom could not be separated from each other.

(Writer's Life 237)

Just such an ambivalent compound suffuses the final tercet of "Sad Steps." Here the chastened acceptance of our mortal solitude strikes a note not dissimilar from the one he had sounded in "At Grass," a poem in which racehorses are disburdened of their earlier effortful lives: "Almanacked, their names live; they // Have slipped their names, and stand at ease" (75). "Sad Steps" offers a similar consolation—bleak, certainly, but also relieved. The frisson of death is acknowledged but moderated ("One shivers slightly"—my italics).

Brownjohn presents Larkin above all as the prophet of disabusement:

As a poet he has taken as his themes such things as the gap between human hope and cold reality; the illusory nature of choice in life; frustration with one's lot in a present which is dismal, and in face of a future which brings only age and death. (4)

"Sad Steps," however, offers a rather different take on the dichotomy between nostalgia for a radiant temps perdu and a bleak present. For in this poem the moon, one of Larkin's "indefinable images of purity and serenity" (Brownjohn 4), becomes the vector for an insight that valorizes the present and allows him to turn with tempered contentment from the past and the expectations it engendered. And that, as it happens, is also the tone embraced by Augustan poets when they turn back to the waking world, chastened and subdued by their night thoughts. Here is Young again:

Thus, Darkness aiding intellectual flight, And sacred Silence whispering truths Divine, And truths Divine converting pain to peace,

My song the midnight raven has outwing'd,
And shot, ambitious of unbounded scenes,
Beyond the flaming limit of the world,
Her gloomy flight. But what avails the flight
Of Fancy, when our hearts remain below? (126)

If Young has Claudius's couplet in mind—"My words fly up, my thoughts remain below. / Words without thoughts never to heaven go" (*Hamlet* 3.3.97–98)—for Larkin, thoughts have no heaven to go to. Their only consolation is the knowledge of an immutable cycle. To that extent "Sad Steps" owes its final debt to Wordsworth's elegy for Lucy, itself a lyric appendix to the line of night pieces. Here the extraplanetary perspectives of those meditations, transcending "the flaming limit of the world," enable the poet to track her rolling around "earth's diurnal course" and to find consolation in the neutering and neutralizing of the human, its becoming "a thing that could not feel" (149)—which is more or less the position at which "Sad Steps" eventually arrives.

Note

1.

Moonlit Night

It seemed as if the heaven
Quietly kissed the earth,
As if to force himself
Into her blossom-trembled dream.

And my soul stretched Wide its wings, Flying through the quiet land As if homeward bound.

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Reviews

A Commitment to the Meaningful

From Guilt to Shame: Auschwitz and After

by Ruth Leys

Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007. 200 pages

American Hunger:

The Problem of Poverty in U.S. Literature, 1840-1945

by Gavin Jones

Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008. 228 pages

William Faulkner: An Economy of Complex Words

by Richard Godden

Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007. 251 pages

Robert Chodat

Walter Benn Michaels was once described as having "dual audiences" (Jeffrey Williams 125), shifting in his work between theoretical essays such as "Against Theory" (1982) and Americanist books such as The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism (1987) and Our America (1995). In more recent work he has cultivated both audiences simultaneously. The Shape of the Signifier (2004) begins by repudiating what philosophers have called the Myth of the Given: the idea that knowledge arises merely from sheer physical events, red light hitting the retina, rather than the ability to form judgments and beliefs about such sensory intake, to assess it cognitively. Michaels extends this critique into broad claims about contemporary culture, exposing the Given not in accounts of color perception but in recent fiction, literary theory, political philosophy, and Bush administration responses to terrorism. Who one is, how one responds affectively, has taken precedence over what one believes, which in turn "disarticulates difference from disagreement" (Shape 181), which in turn makes us ignore concrete socioeconomic inequalities. For Michaels, we get distracted by "liberal issues" like race, cultural identity, and gay marriage whenever we

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make a "commitment to the material object," which is ultimately a "commitment to the meaningless" (7).

Whatever one thinks of Michaels's claims, or the rapid-fire links he draws between them, his forensic vigor makes him one of the most ambitious and compelling commentators today. So it's exciting that Princeton University Press has made him the editor of its new series, 20/21, the aim of which will be, as the publisher's catalog says, to make twentieth- and twenty-first century American literature and culture "available for critical work that interrogates rather than reproduces the terms in which we have come to understand it" (Princeton 8). It's exciting, moreover, that the first three books of the series address both of Michaels's dual audiences and engage many of the themes that his work has sought to highlight. What first and foremost unites Ruth Leys's From Guilt to Shame, Gavin Jones's American Hunger, and Richard Godden's William Faulkner is an eschewal of the Myth of the Given and what we might call, modifying Michaels, a commitment to the meaningful. Uniting them further is the way, to one degree or another, all three resist an exaggerated emphasis on identity politics. Each of these deeply interesting books warrants a full review of its own, but taken as a triptych and situated alongside Michaels's own influential work, they can help us gauge some of the ways recent criticism has treated language, interpretation, and other themes central to literary studies as a whole. As I'll ultimately suggest, reading them together also affords an opportunity to consider directions that the study of American literature and culture might take in the years to come.

Of the three, From Guilt to Shame is most directly preoccupied with theoretical questions of intention and meaning. In it, Leys builds on her last book, Trauma: A Genealogy, to argue that recent models of trauma can illuminate recent models of selfhood, models that Leys associates with the emotions named in her title. After World War II, she argues, discussion of trauma focused on the "survivor guilt" reported by concentration camp victims and was cast primarily in Freudian terms. Central to this analysis was the claim that, in experiencing trauma, the subject hypnotically returns to originary scenes of violence and regresses to something resembling the psychic state of infancy, eventually identifying with new figures of authority: SS guards become fathers. This identification with the aggressor instigates aggression toward others—one wishes for the death of one's fellow inmates—that is eventually turned toward oneself, resulting in a self-lacerating melancholy. The last 40 years, Leys argues,

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have seen an erosion of this "mimetic" (passim) model. Particularly influential was the work of Terrence Des Pres in the 1970s, which fused sociobiological claims about human adaptability with Erving Goffmann's claims about the role-playing nature of social existence. For Des Pres, concentration camp victims imitated Nazi guards as a heroic dissimulation, a "dramaturgical" (qtd. in Leys 14, 70 ff) strategy of survival enabled by a spectatorial distance from the violence surrounding them. The effect of this and other "anti-mimetic" arguments, claims Leys, was to shift attention away from how subjects interpret a traumatic event and toward their (apparently unmediated) experience of it as the particular subjects they are. In her final chapters, Leys considers Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Giorgio Agamben, two figures who extend this line of thought beyond the confines of trauma theory as such. What matters for Sedgwick is that affects like shame seem wholly nonteleological, "triggered" (qtd. in Leys 136) by no particular intentional object; they therefore make manifest a subject's (queer) difference from others. For Agamben, shame is an "ontological sentiment" (qtd. in Leys 170), something traveling across time and place, enveloping everyone living after Auschwitz with a new sort of "ethical material" (qtd. in Leys 174). In both cases, the central role that accounts of selfhood once gave to guilt, an emotion arising from particular intentional actions, is now played by shame, something associated with being seen as a particular kind of person.

From Guilt to Shame is a powerful and boldly argued book, elegantly weaving together theoretical and historical claims. For some readers it will recall the work of Ian Hacking, who has also unearthed the history of some of our culture's most contested psychomedical concepts. It also clearly recalls The Shape of the Signifier, and it's unsurprising that Leys's concluding chapters cite Michaels at several points. Like Michaels, Leys charts a cultural shift away from intentionalist models of mental phenomena and toward nonintentionalist models that privilege seemingly uninterpreted bodily givens. Two things separate Leys from Michaels, however. One is that, as bold as it is, Leys's argument has a smaller scope and avoids the temptation to draw extensive connections between questions of intention and questions of public policy. Second, Leys's notion of intention is wider than that used by Michaels, who makes little explicit use of the Freudian categories that Leys wishes to recuperate. Leys's recourse to psychoanalysis may seem odd at first glance, given that Freud has often been taken to offer causal-biological arguments of the sort that

she questions. But her appeal isn't unwarranted: whatever Freud's scientific aspirations, his work also belongs to the interpretivist tradition Leys defends, and she would probably—and rightly—say that what matters for her about unconscious intentional states is less that they're unconscious than that they're intentional. The point here is that Leys sides explicitly with Michaels while at the same time revising his arguments in nontrivial ways. For Michaels, Paul de Man mistakenly tries to detach a text from an author's intention and belief. For Leys, citing but parenthetically modifying Michaels, de Man's mistake is instead to discuss "what a text is without regard to the author's (conscious or unconscious) intention" (154).

Gavin Jones's American Hunger says little about guilt or shame but follows up Leys's critique of identity. The purpose of the book is, as the preface says, "to redress the neglect of poverty as a category of critical discourse in the study of American literature and culture" (xiii). Doing so requires seeing "the category of poverty explicitly, in its own light" (18) and relegating questions of race and gender into the background. It also, and more surprisingly, means diminishing issues of class. For while the "notorious downgrading of class as a category of literary analysis" is the "obvious reason" for our lack of attention to poverty (6), Jones urges us to resist collapsing these two terms. Class, he says, tends to be regarded as a "form of cultural identity and/or political agency" (9); like race and gender, it has "the potential to become an absolute essence not a description of relative and ultimately changeable social position" (130). Nobody, however, wants to be utterly destitute, not even people who invoke traditions of "voluntary simplicity" (Lawrence Buell) or who sometimes treat poverty as a desirable identity (Hardt and Negri). As an "enforced situation of economic disadvantage," poverty is—and here again Jones intersects with Leys—a form of "trauma" (15), resisting "the affirmative pull of working-class consciousness, middle-class self-privation, or ontological theory" (11).

Each of Jones's three chapters orchestrates an encounter between literary figures who treat poverty as a basically permanent condition, "pauperism" (passim), and figures who resist such reification. Chapter 1 pits Henry Thoreau and Rebecca Harding Davis, among others, against Herman Melville, who unlike them saw poverty as a social condition with identifiable causes, not a moral or spiritual vice. In chapter 2 Jones revises the familiar juxtaposition of *Sister Carrie* and *The House of Mirth* in order to show how, after Darwin, the Progressive era debated the extent

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to which pauperism was a biological condition. By the Depression, argues Jones in his final chapter, poverty was primarily a psychological state, a "profound bewilderment, discord, uncertainty, and personal ambiguity" (114) of the sort depicted by James Agee and Richard Wright. For Agee, however—and as with Dreiser, despite his reputation as a political Progressive—such a psychology is said to have biological or "glandular" sources, whereas for Wright it is simultaneously a socioeconomic condition, a racially significant phenomenon, and something "metaphysical": the desire, as Jones says, "that constitutes the human subject," black and white alike (145).

Jones's readings are detailed and richly informed, and his discussions of the social-scientific background—the shift from moral to biological to psychological explanations of poverty—provide a valuable history, one that should interest critics regardless of their stance toward identity politics. Placing Jones's book next to Leys's, however, may for some readers provoke questions of the sort often asked about certain kinds of historicist approaches. Leys writes, as she says, a work of "intellectual history" (13), and accordingly focuses almost entirely on non-narrative discursive prose. American Hunger provides, by contrast, a "cultural history" combining "creative literature and social discourse" (xv). One need not cling to fantasies about the unalloyed autonomy of art to notice that Jones's focus on different speech genres should make his task somewhat less straightforward than Leys's. If, after all, narratives make discursive assertions, they would seem at the very least to do so in more oblique ways than social theories and other premise-and-conclusion types of texts. Yet American Hunger never fully acknowledges this methodological hurdle. The book doesn't wholly overlook the stylistic and formal features of the fiction it discusses, but these features seldom hinder it from identifying how a story "defines," "explains," or "views" poverty. The result is that Leys's explicit commitment to the meaningful tends to become, in American Hunger, an implicit commitment to the transparency of literary texts. Thus, for example, the odd and repeated reference to novelists as theorists: "Melville theorizes poverty as a social state" pressuring individuals to deny degrees of agency (45); "Wharton and Wright develop surprisingly similar theories of poverty" (149). Thus too perhaps, though more indirectly, the book's overwhelming focus on literary realism. Whether or not the relatively familiar forms of Dreiser and Wharton really do yield clear-headed theories, most readers would probably find theories less self-evidently extractable from,

say, Three Lives-despite the fact that Stein was writing just as The House of Mirth was published and despite the fact that she also describes characters living on the edge of poverty. For similar reasons, more extensive consideration of As I Lay Dying or Wright's posthumously published Lawd Today! would illuminatingly complicate our sense of the strategies that Depression-era writers used in telling stories about poverty. Melville's later novels are of course frequently said to anticipate such twentieth-century experiments, but with partial exceptions-Pierre is said to recognize "the capacity of poverty to trouble the linguistic realm" (58)—American Hunger says relatively little about the intractability that critics often identify in them. The Confidence Man in particular gets short shrift, almost as if Melville were being faulted for writing a text that is, as Jones rightly remarks, "difficult to position ethically" (60). The introduction of American Hunger criticizes deconstructionists for stressing "uncertainty instead of the concrete limitations of need" (15), but surely one need not be a committed deconstructionist to notice how uncertainty pervades both the writing and reading of modern texts, or to believe that such instabilities may in themselves indicate something important about how modern writers have imagined the poor.

Richard Godden's William Faulkner: An Economy of Complex Words cannot be accused of neglecting either intractable texts or his own interpretive framework, and of the three new books in the 20/21 series, it offers the most compelling mixture of literary analysis and theoretical argument. In Fictions of Labor: William Faulkner and the South's Long Revolution (1997), Godden described Faulkner's fiction of the 1930s as-and here his work, like Jones's book, might be read as providing a prehistory to the postwar theories that Leys examines—an expression of social trauma: specifically the trauma arising when Southern landowners recognized their dependence on coerced black labor, a dependence marking them as what Godden calls "blacks in whiteface" (Economy 3). For Godden, the effort to avoid seeing what one sees explains Faulkner's stylistic difficulties, which force readers to notice what his narrators deny. Godden's new book extends this analysis into an account of Faulkner's later fiction, "anatomizing," as he says, "the varieties of mourning exhibited by Faulkner's white landowners as they grasped the consequences of modernity in the New Deal's reconstruction of their depressed region" (4). In the 1930s, as world cotton markets became glutted, the federal government paid Southern landowners to put their cotton acreage out of production. This

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changed sharecroppers into wage earners and effectively put them out of work, which in turn led to a huge decline in tenantry (62 percent in Mississippi alone) and to massive migration northward. Faulkner's later fiction, argues Godden, expresses the felt contradictions engendered by this social revolution, the unease experienced when Hegelian relations of codependence undergo a radical shift. "[T]o loose the other is to lose the self's best parts" (3), as he puts it, which makes Faulkner's fiction of the forties and fifties, written at a moment of enforced social and psychic loosening, an "exercise in swallowed grief on behalf of a class that has ceased to exist" (4).

Sketching this theoretical and historical background allows Godden to challenge some critical commonplaces about Faulkner's later fiction. Against, for instance, the claim that Flem Snopes of The Hamlet embodies the spirit of capitalism, Godden emphasizes not only how inept Flem is as a businessman but also his ties to a "radical family tradition" (39), a tradition most threateningly evident in Ab Snopes's barn burning. Flem, says Godden, is "the political child of Ab," smoldering with "murderous but finally ineffective class resentments" (41), but critics lose sight of this Snopesian populism because they identify with Ratliff, whose narrative perspective is more class-bound than they realize. A similarly powerful revision comes in Godden's discussion (coauthored with Neil Polk) of the commissary ledgers in "The Bear." Most critics overlook the ledgers' reference to the figure of Brownlee, a slave purchased by Isaac McCaslin's father in the 1830s. But a painstaking analysis of the ledgers, which consist of an elliptical back-and-forth between Isaac's uncle and father, reveals what Isaac himself refuses to face: that the ledgers are an extended admission of a homosexual and miscegenous relationship between his father and the slave. For Godden, the Brownlee material undermines the narrative Isaac wants to tell himself as he prepares to repudiate his family inheritance. He turns his grandfather into a villain, an "antebellum labor lord" who is "potent yet criminal in his potency," all the while occluding his own father's "local and revolutionary practices" (148-50).

It's hard to do justice in a small space to Godden's remarkably assiduous readings, which ultimately attempt to explain why Faulkner, faced with the loss of the familiar social and psychological structures of the South, turned toward war fiction in A Fable. An Economy of Complex Words will clearly be required reading for Faulkner specialists. But non-Faulknerians will also learn a good deal from Godden's book, not only

for the way it reorients our understanding of a major twentieth-century novelist but also for its theoretical self-consciousness. Most significantly, Godden never fails to make explicit the philosophical sources grounding his own particular commitment to the meaningful. To state the obvious, most readers will not take Faulkner to be discussing New Deal agricultural policies or the black diaspora they necessitated. So the interpretive challenge for anyone who believes these historical circumstances crucially shape his late fiction (and Godden distinguishes himself sharply from the "new economic criticism," which treats the relation between words and economies as analogical rather than causal) is to say how these circumstances are manifest amidst Faulkner's hugely elliptical and dizzyingly paratactic "complex words." Godden answers this challenge, much like Jones, by countering deconstructive claims about the infinite deferral of meaning, which would weaken the sense that Faulkner is describing a specific social history. But he also explains how, in his view, words can shift between dual meanings, a semantics and a subsemantics. The introduction of the book cites Bakhtin on the tie between language and evolving social conditions, but a more important touchstone is Paul Ricoeur, whose distinction between first-order and second-order reference Godden quotes at key junctures. Just as Freud allows Leys to extend intention beyond conscious intentional states, Ricoeur's distinction allows Godden to argue that the connotations of Faulkner's late fiction—connotations about, say, the sexuality of Isaac's father-have a truth value equivalent to the conventional meanings of words. The mobile relation between first- and second-order references, says Godden, modifying Ricoeur, is what reveals "the deep [economic] structures of reality" (134; Godden's brackets). Not all readers, of course, will be convinced that Ricoeur's psychoanalytic hermeneutics helps us locate what Godden occasionally calls the "deep narrative" (48) or "deep structure" (80) of Faulkner's texts. Followers not only of Derrida, but also of de Man, Gadamer, Iser, and Davidson will likely find themselves questioning Godden's insistence on the existence of conclusive second-order meanings. But Godden always acknowledges his own contestable position, at times even conceding that his meticulous readings may be overstating his case. In doing so he identifies precisely the sort of challenges that a writer such as Faulkner initiates, and if his theoretical explanations occasionally make for dense expositions, his ability to move between the particular and the general gives his work an unusual dialectical vigor and vitality.

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What, then, do the first three books of 20/21 say about the study of twentieth- and twenty-first century literature today? What sorts of interventions can we expect from the series? Three books are hardly enough of a basis for anything other than provisional assessments, but one can venture a few observations. One concerns the literary-historical side of Michaels's dual audiences. If the early books of 20/21 are any indication, our discipline is still a bit unsure what to do with postwar literature, especially its fiction. The 1970s saw considerable scholarship devoted to contemporary fiction: linguistic theories newly arrived from Europe mapped well onto fiction newly arrived from Barth and Pynchon, all of which heralded an age beyond the twin regency of New Criticism and modernism. This changed somewhat in the 1980s, when, with some notable exceptions, the historicist turn drew scholarly attention away from contemporary texts, and publishers became even more wary of weakselling experimental fiction. As a result, the literary history of the postwar years remains relatively unsettled today, its major texts and movements still somewhat undefined despite the fact that the period now extends longer than most scholars give to high modernism. Postmodernism—the term and the phenomenon-still earns consideration, with Pynchon partnered today more commonly with DeLillo than with Barth. Not only, however, does the term now seem just a partial classification of the fiction of the 1960s and 70s, but American fiction of the last decade and a half has moved even further into what Andrew Hoberek has recently called a "phase of as-yet-uncategorized diversity" (240).1 One expects that in the future 20/21 will offer major contributions to the debate over the shape of postwar literary history. Its first three books, however, stick to timehonored figures. Godden illuminatingly extends discussions of Faulkner beyond the familiar Sound and the Fury-Absalom, Absalom! sequence, and connections between Wharton and Wright have probably never been identified in quite the way that Jones does. But one looks forward to books addressing a less canonical set of writers and to a concerted effort (here again The Shape of the Signifier may provide a jumping-off point) to make criticism keep pace with the literature of its own time and place.

A second observation concerns the theoretical side of the dual audiences. As I've suggested, all three books here can be understood as resisting a commitment to meaninglessness. But only Leys's book fully recognizes that influential arguments against interpretation have originated not only in literary theory; they've also, and just as influentially, come from sci-

ence. This relative oversight is somewhat surprising, given the range of remarkable developments in the cognitive and biological sciences over the last several decades. Leys touches on these developments throughout her book, most directly in chapter 4, which canvases arguments about facial recognition and the emotions. Ultimately she disagrees with such arguments, and for good reasons: they depend on versions of the Given. But she is right to take the scientific arguments as seriously as she does. Even if we resist the growing ranks of critics who have read literary texts in light of cognitive and evolutionary science, it's undeniable that many intelligent and powerful people have taken this research to be revolutionary. Cognitivist and evolutionary theories might seem a far cry from the novels of Wharton and Faulkner, but they have become a crucial part of the institutional and intellectual context within which our critical interpretations occur, not to mention a theme to which many of our most interesting contemporary writers are themselves turning. If, then, we wish to understand the literature and culture of the last several decades in the way 20/21 promises, we should anticipate more books that address the kinds of arguments Leys scrutinizes.

A final remark concerns the critique of identity politics that some readers may expect with the inauguration of 20/21, and which these three books-most explicitly those of Jones and Leys-can be read as adapting from Michaels. There may indeed be signs that identity has run its course as a dominant theme of critical discussion. But we should, I think, be cautious in announcing (happily or mournfully) its demise. Specifically, we should ask if claims about difference have deeper moral, epistemological, and historical sources than we sometimes recognize. As Winfried Flück has observed, when power is understood, as it nowadays often is, to reside in culture as much as in political or economic institutions, then radical otherness can be a powerful form of resistance. Claims about difference might be a matter less of intellectual sloppiness than of "cultural dehierarchization" (220), an assertion of "self-worth" in the face of power, "another turn of the screw in the cultural history of individuation" (221)—in short, part of a humanistic search for self-realization whose roots lie at the origin of modernity. An analogous way of putting this would be to say that for good or for ill, modernity has fragmented whatever shared criteria we may once have had for applying basic moral and political concepts. Different people and different groups today learn different ways of identifying what counts as worthiness, fairness, or justice,

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and it would require the Platonism of a Leo Strauss or the Kantianism of a Jürgen Habermas to believe that such agreements are primarily a matter of reasoned argument. To recall an observation from Bernard Williams, whom Leys mentions in her discussions of shame, most people wouldn't save their spouses from a sinking ship on the basis of reasons, but on account of deep attachments and affiliations, the sense that this person is partly constitutive of who one is (17-18). To say this is neither to dismiss argumentation nor to confine ourselves to the familial notion of identity whose history Michaels partially traces in Our America. But it is to suggest why reference to identity may continue to have genuine explanatory power, and that an attention to difference may derive partly from a reasonable awareness of the limits of reasons. Understood in these terms, difference won't vanish anytime soon, nor should we necessarily want it to. Indeed, our attachments and affiliations may be part of the reason we understand the last quarter-century's swelling socioeconomic inequalities as an egregious problem in the first place. The great promise of 20/21 is not that it will settle these and other debates. As its first three offerings make abundantly clear, it promises instead to extend them in forceful and provocative ways and to help establish the terms for meaningful discussion in the coming years.

Note

1. For some further recent reflection on the status of contemporary fiction in the academy, from a scholar of Hoberek's (and my own) generation, see Amy Hungerford.

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Modernism's Passage through the Blitz

Modernism and World War II

by Marina MacKay

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 192 pages

Debra Rae Cohen

As a recent boomlet of important works attests, the mid-twentieth century has become fertile ground for reimagining the character and the history of modernist production. Whatever one chooses to call this period—late modernism, intermodernism, transitional modernism—and however one chooses to characterize it—as a period of decline, of "demetropolitanization" (Esty 16), of increased political engagement, or of "unseasonable forms" (Jameson 305)—it is no longer the case that, as Tyrus Miller argued in his 1999 *Late Modernism*, modernist studies is disproportionately weighted toward the investigation of origins.

Almost all of these formulations remain inseparable, at least in the British context, from relations between modernism and empire. Jed Esty's much-lauded A Shrinking Island, for instance, has underscored the importance in this period of national consciousness and resurgent notions of English cultural particularity. It's in relation to Esty's volume in particular that Marina MacKay's Modernism and World War II must inevitably be measured, and MacKay's book proves a valuable companion to Esty's, succeeding in its aim of "reinstat[ing] the complexity of mid-century British culture" (21) if not, finally, living up to the sweep of its title. Though the book effectively demonstrates not just the salience but the inescapable centrality of World War II to British literary history, it falls short of articulating a fully theorized connection between the war and modernist practice.

The book's basic premise is certainly enticing. Modernism and World War II in large part echoes Esty's claim that the fulfillment of "certain aspects of modernist social doctrine" brought about a shift in a modernist practice that had been "predicated on the nonfulfillment of its own ideals" (12). MacKay, however, posits this less as a rendering obsolete of modernist aesthetic modes than as a self-conscious revisionism. Again like Esty, she associates this midcentury shift with an Anglocentric inwardness. But she

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argues that the Second World War has been the unacknowledged elephant in the room of modernist studies, and she sees it as perhaps the key moment in the reformulation of modernism as a literary movement. In her view, the war dictated a kind of consensus politics that required artists to renegotiate the oppositional connotations of modernist practice—a conflation of form and politics that, she argues, following Lawrence Rainey, was always "causally vague and politically optimistic" (9). Indeed, one of MacKay's most telling assertions is that the assumed outsider stance of modernism was always in large part a fiction, and by the late 1930s "the proximity of modernism to the centres of political power" (13) had become hard to ignore.

MacKay's subject is thus a "public modernism" (21) far removed from ivory-tower aestheticism. Her readings of works by Virginia Woolf, T. S. Eliot, Rebecca West, Henry Green, and Evelyn Waugh depict these authors as variously negotiating the impurity of their necessary World War II-era political compromises. MacKay is one of our most sophisticated readers of the modernist-era public sphere in all its political complexity, and her book offers remarkably vivid and suggestive repositionings of both canonical and less familiar texts in the context of contemporary political discourses: she is particularly enlightening on the various ramifications of the entre-deux-guerres backlash against the excesses of Great War propaganda. While she does not quite justify her risky claim that "all major British writers of the mid-century made the guilty compromise, knowing it to be exactly that, of supporting the Second World War" (10; my italics)—a formulation that assumes an initial political orthodoxy unsupported by the specifics she so deftly provides—her individual chapters fascinatingly complicate our sense of the political and philosophical conflicts at work in midcentury texts. In particular, she disturbs our easy assumptions about the modernist left and right. She deflates the heroicized image of a uniquely antifascist Virginia Woolf, for instance, in ways that both build on and extend earlier efforts in this direction. Resisting the familiar conflation of Woolf's Between the Acts with the antimilitarism of Three Guineas, MacKay argues instead that this last novel's ruralism involves a proleptic "participation in what have since become consolatory cultural memories of the war" (23). More convincingly, her intertextual reading of Four Quartets alongside Eliot's wartime propaganda pieces significantly amplifies the Quartets' political resonances by foregrounding their embedded argument for US intervention and teasing out of their

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language a "critique of entrenched habit" (76) that condemns the "paralyzing gerontocracy" of appeasement.

MacKay's chapters on Green and Waugh similarly enrich our sense of their resistance to the coming postwar welfare state, a society that, she argues, served as the social vindication of literary modernism even as it threatened the rentier privilege that had made modernism possible. She traces across Green's writings, for instance, a studied, class-based neutrality that he saw as "high artistic disinterestedness" (116), but which MacKay links to a Great War-bred resistance to political rhetoric that, in its subsequent failure to recognize Nazi atrocities, led to "appalling consequences" (113). And she clarifies the Tory nostalgia of Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* by reading the novel as a rewriting of *Put Out More Flags*, written three years earlier. Where the earlier book illustrated the way that "creative dissidence is victimised by political expediency masquerading as patriotic duty" (121), MacKay argues, the latter projects a postwar world in which democracy will level the creative individual.

But while MacKay effectively demonstrates the need to limn the social and especially the political contingencies that shaped and reshaped modernism, her argument can seem mechanical when it comes to the formal specifics of that reshaping: she wants to read just about every work she treats as involving not just implicit but deliberate revaluations of modernist technique. Though it's clear that, as Mackay argues, "the dominant aesthetic of Second World War writing is recursive," making "an aesthetic virtue out of . . . brute historical fact" (112), to read such recursiveness as inevitably aesthetic self-correction sometimes feels as "causally vague" (9) as earlier conflations of formal and political opposition. It seems reasonable, for instance, to read Four Quartets in this manner, given its self-conscious depiction of Eliot's modernist poetic process, and to accept that the poem's refusal to "pledge consolatory certainties" (88) ties his own poetic striving "solidly to the experience of war" (89). But MacKay's argument seems strained in the case of, say, Waugh, whose status as a modernist navel gazer she bases on an essay he wrote on cubism at a precocious fourteen.

Given her stated intention to intervene in modernist historiography, it's somewhat surprising that MacKay in fact never provides a working definition of modernism with which to justify her intriguingly varied selection of writers (canonical high modernists, representatives of the "second generation," and possibly-sometime-maybe-modernists). Instead,

she simply extends the modernist umbrella. In this respect, her volume exemplifies the difficulties involved in recent efforts to expand the modernist canon without losing the value of the term altogether. As Geoff Gilbert has put it, "the problem with 'modernism' is that it does not mean very strongly" (xiii), and here its meaning is particularly diffuse. It's not that one couldn't make a case for describing any and all of these writers as modernists; it's just that MacKay doesn't make it.

The chapter on Rebecca West's Black Lamb and Grey Falcon exemplifies both the volume's undoubted strengths and its peculiarities. On the one hand, MacKay provides what is in many ways the best single reading of West's huge and knotty volume, an account immensely valuable for locating the book's idiosyncratic defense of small-state nationalism in the context of contemporaneous discussions by writers ranging from John Maynard Keynes to Noel Coward to the diplomat Cassandra Lord Vansittart. Her discussion illuminates West's thorny relations with Bloomsburyites and political purists as well as the determined, historically savvy antifascism that made West's intervention, and its shape, necessary. But when it comes to dealing with the "modernism" of that work, MacKay is puzzlingly nonspecific. Whether, when, and why West can be considered modernist is itself a complex question—one, indeed, that many scholars have ducked by conveniently assuming her modernism to be coterminous with her early leftist politics. Here MacKay assumes it, period. She attempts to tie Black Lamb and Grey Falcon into her argument about modernist revisionism by identifying the book (by way of its competing exemplary myths) as a late modernist deployment of the "mythical method" (65). In the context of West's long antipathy to Eliot and her skepticism about Joyce, however, this move seems both insufficient and arbitrary. MacKay claims for West an endorsement of Eliot's formula and a "seemingly universalizing impulse to myth . . . shared with her canonical contemporaries" (65) based on little more than the book's emblematic deployment of the black lamb and grey falcon tales—which she acknowledges elsewhere are offered up as demystifications, illustrations of the process of mystification, what she says Auden termed "antimythological myth" (66-67). So why posit their connection to Eliotic myth in the first place, other than to shoehorn West into an ill-fitting argument in a way that detracts from the chapter's singular force?

Here as elsewhere, the epithet modernist often feels unexamined, inserted as a mode of shorthand legitimization. Like the notion of the

"guilty compromise," it performs a sleight-of-hand assumption of selfevidence—a rhetorical ploy that only serves to undercut the depth and erudition of MacKay's cultural analysis and to flatten the very complexity she has worked to reinstate. Ironically, MacKay's book is less compelling in terms of the narrative she posits than as an illustration of diversity, a study of the plural modernisms she mentions only once, at the end of the introduction, before giving in to the temptations of generalization. A seeming aside in her chapter on Green—about Green's legibility in relation to "an idea of modernism that has always been committed to unlikeness" (92)—serves as a kind of marker for a road not taken, a hint of how MacKay might have enriched her argument by grounding it in a theoretical elaboration of how that "unlikeness" related to the privileged illusion of modernist outsiderdom, enabling its construction and mediating its passing. Finally, it's the richness of MacKay's contextualization rather than the explanatory force of her broader claims that makes Modernism and World War II a valuable addition to the work on this richly complicated chapter of British cultural history.

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Postmodernist Poetry's "Blue Period"

Blue Studios: Poetry and Its Cultural Work

by Rachel Blau DuPlessis

Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006. 302 pages

Mark Scroggins

If one wanted to make such distinctions in the face of a collection that flaunts its cross-generic status, one might note that Rachel Blau DuPlessis has distinguished herself in at least three types of writing. She is a celebrated academic literary scholar, author of Writing beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers; H.D.: The Career of That Struggle; and Genders, Races, and Religious Cultures in Modern American Poetry. She is an innovative poet working in a postmodernist idiom, her most notable work surely the ongoing serial poem Drafts, three volumes of which are now in print: Drafts 1-38, Toll; Drafts. Drafts 39-57, Pledge, with Draft, Unnumbered: Précis; and Torque: Drafts 58-76. And she has written many pieces that she calls essays, nonfictional critical and analytical writings that incorporate the formal strategies of her poetry, and in which she never shies away from the first person. The oft-cited "For the Etruscans," a breakthrough text for DuPlessis, is the best known of these essays, first collected in 1990 in The Pink Guitar: Writing as Feminist Practice. Blue Studios, then, is a sequel to The Pink Guitar, a new collection of essays in the etymological sense of forays or attempts—twelve attempts at definition and clarification that themselves resist any definitional or pigeonholing impulses the reader might bring to them.

The University of Alabama Press, in conjunction with the publication of *Blue Studios*, has reissued *The Pink Guitar* as well. Both books are included in the press's Modern and Contemporary Poetics series, which in the 10 years since its inception in 1998 has issued works of conventional literary criticism and scholarship as well as the collected occasional prose of such poets as Rosmarie Waldrop, Lorenzo Thomas, and Jerome Rothenberg, anthologies of avant-garde Southern and African American poetry, and a wide range of writing that falls under the rubric of poetics. Save for the anthology, there's a little bit of each of these genres in *Blue Studios*. The pieces are grouped into four sections: "Attitudes and

Practices" (three pieces on the genre of the essay itself and its place in DuPlessis's feminist writing practice); "Marble Paper" (three on literary history, broadly defined); "Urrealism" (three detailed readings of individual poets); and "Migrated Into" (three reflections on the poetics and progress of *Drafts*).

"Blue Studio," DuPlessis explains at the outset,

is a pensive work site where a new world is hoped and an old can interrupt this hope. Thus it is a place of conflict and cross motives. Blue Studio is particularly a metaphor for working through negativity, an idea that threads through this book.

Blue is at once the utopian poetic azure of Mallarmé and a dreary, defeated state of mind—the blues. These layered cultural associations of the word, for DuPlessis, are full of private associations in addition to implications about gender:

I began blue—as a *Blau*. This onomastic word offered me a talismanic color, and insofar as adults have such colors, it remains one. These essays negotiate a border between patriarchal culture and postpatriarchal culture—a utopian blueness in which the "blue" that is for "boys" crosses with my family name of origin.

(1)

While many academic writers allow themselves autobiographical flourishes like this in introductions to their books (or, more often, in prefaces), DuPlessis maintains this mixture of registers throughout *Blue Studios*. Her style is personal, always self-reflexively grounded in her experience of reading and thinking. She does not shy away from playfulness in the form of puns and etymological games or from formal extravagances such as passages of lineated verse; and she offers both theoretical sophistication and a hard-nosed critical edge. She is, in short, doubly committed to complex formal analysis and ideological assessment. It's an all-too-rare combination to find in the writings of a literary scholar, and almost as rare to find in an essayist.

The informal essay holds a tenuous place among academic discourses. Its exploratory nature, refusal to structure itself around clear-cut theses, and open embrace of the first person—the essayist's voice—have largely made it suspect in a discipline that spent much of the last century trying to establish itself as objective. Nonetheless, critics and theorists inspired by

such writers as Roland Barthes, Susan Sontag, Walter Benjamin, Edward Said, and Theodor Adorno continue to explore the essay form. The latest attempt to cordon off the energies of the essay has been through the establishment of creative nonfiction tracks in creative writing programs. Here the essay has all too often been tamed into a personal rumination or memoir. What is lost to literary studies when the essay is thus dismissed is any clear sense of the analytical power of the form, the way the explicitly declared first person can serve as a powerful fulcrum for untangling the relationships among social structures, personal histories, and aesthetic achievements.

DuPlessis has done a good deal of thinking about the essay form and about her own particular variations on it. The introduction and first three chapters of *Blue Studios* ("Attitudes and Practices") present a number of explanations and manifesto-like justifications of her essay writing. "The post-patriarchal essay," she argues in the introduction,

offers a method of thought and an ethical attitude, not simply a style or a rhetorical choice. It is a method of the passionate, curious, multiple-vectored, personable, and invested discussion, as if a person thinking were simply talking in the studio of speculation, grief, and utopia. Essays can break the normalizing dichotomy between discursive and imaginative writing, between the analytic and the creative. (3)

In "Reader, I Married Me: Becoming a Feminist Critic," an exhilarating account of her own growing political awareness, DuPlessis describes the palimpsestic essay form in "For the Etruscans" as "sensuous theorizing":

If I choose to create desire, attention, loose ends, and an endless intersubjectivity between others as equals (undoing "the" binary), then I am putting a little bit of utopian change into writing. The essay is antipatriarchal writing as a method of investigation and an instrument for change. (28)

According to DuPlessis, the essay should be able to avoid both the impersonality or spurious objectivity of conventional academic writing and self-centered monovocality, the empty valorization of personal voice:

The essay expresses community, even when apparently singular, and hence allows us to apprehend communitarian yearnings via

what seems to be a private play of thought. Far from being exercises in narcissism, in gaining a personal voice, essays are practices in multiplicity, in polyvocality, in other opinions intercutting, in heterogeneous, faceted perspectives. In short, essays are not a way of "gaining a voice" but of losing one in the largeness of something else. (42)

For DuPlessis, then, the essay is a fundamentally political writing, one that promotes "community" over the personal, "polyvocality" over the singular. But is there a necessary, an inherent connection between the forms taken by DuPlessis's nonfictional writings and her gendered political stance? Is such writing as "For the Etruscans" and the other essays gathered in *The Pink Guitar* and *Blue Studios* somehow inherently feminine, in the sense that term has accrued from French feminist thought? While DuPlessis always identifies herself as a feminist and presents her essays as part of a feminist counterhegemonic practice—"For *Blue Studios* there is no way to be 'postfeminist'" (7)—she is suspicious of the easy identification of her writing with an *écriture féminine*, a feminine writing whose formal heterodoxy is inherently liberating:

The reason it has been blinding to call a certain rhetoric "feminine" is that it seems to credit our gender (speaking as Herself) with a style disruptive of hegemony. Yet it is not impossible (and can be seen, for example, in some of Charles Olson's essays) that this radical, rousing style can be coupled with ancient, patriarchal gender tropes. Thus any call for the "feminine" in discourse is only interesting when crossed with a feminist, or otherwise liberatory, critical project; rhetorical choices are only part of a politics. (46)

"For the Etruscans' was widely taken to defend 'feminine language," DuPlessis writes, but "what I actually said is that all rhetorical choice was situational and that nonhegemonic rhetorical strategies are often grasped by groups (women as 'ambiguously non-hegemonic') in need of oppositional statement" (43).

DuPlessis's formulation of the relationship between feminism and aesthetics seems an eminently reasonable intervention into an issue that has bedeviled politically progressive writers and literary critics for three-quarters of a century, from the so-called Brecht-Lukács debate down to the Language Poets: what is the relationship between avant-garde forms

of writing (modernist and postmodernist) and progressive politics? Or as DuPlessis puts it, "How to calibrate the political meanings and contributions of creative practices?" (2). Is there, as Julia Kristeva argues in *Revolution in Poetic Language*, an inherently counterhegemonic charge to the disjunctive, nonlinear, or otherwise obdurately "difficult" texts of modernism, regardless of the political stance of the given writer? Or does such writing, as the examples of such modernists as Louis-Ferdinand Céline, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, and Wyndham Lewis would suggest, especially lend itself to culturally or politically retrograde projects?

The political implications of any particular specimen of modernist or postmodernist writing, DuPlessis argues, cannot be specified by an examination of the forms and rhetorics of that writing alone, but must be arrived at by studying the negotiations among the work's formal and rhetorical shape, its author's stated political stance, and the expectations of both a contemporaneous and a contemporary readership.

DuPlessis faults the poet Charles Olson (probably the first person to use the term *postmodernist* in a literary context) for his perpetuation of "ancient, patriarchal gender tropes." Even more troubling, obviously, is the case of Ezra Pound, the anti-Semitic fascist whose work has wielded an incalculable influence on postmodern poetry, and about whom DuPlessis wrote her doctoral dissertation. DuPlessis will not deny the importance of Pound's poetry for her own writing, and speaks eloquently of the initial sense the Poundian system gives one of having engaged in a collective enterprise of knowledge and social correction:

who among us of our generation who thinks at all of the literary has not been hailed into Pound's secretum (or perhaps to Olson's)—that sense that you were one of the cultural elite of knowers? . . . you could do what needed to be done; you could articulate values without dialogue, in cadres, not in communities. (250)

But Pound's particular modernism offered an ideological dead end: "Who has not been hailed into the band of knowers of Pound only to find that one was actually unable to read but only to parrot versions of Pound's unforgiving binaries?" (250)

DuPlessis asserts that she composed her own long poem *Drafts*—quite consciously composed in Canto-length segments, and with a projected overall scale comparable to that of *The Cantos*—not so much in imitation as in an act of "critical resistance":

I wanted to make an alternative *Cantos*, a counter-*Cantos*. This is not so much a fantasy of Oedipal replacement (well, you tell me!) as it is a desire to place a counterweight inside culture and history, a poem with parallel ambition that comes to thoroughly different conclusions by different literary means. (250)

DuPlessis may exaggerate the extent to which her work employs "different literary means" from Pound's, in light of the fact that there are strikingly Cantos-like moments throughout Drafts. What's more, her ambition to produce a "counter-Cantos" is an honorable but rather familiar one: William Carlos Williams's Paterson, Olson's The Maximus Poems, and Louis Zukofsky's "A" can all be read as self-conscious (if ideologically divergent) responses to Pound's long poem. What is striking, indeed, is the very extent to which these works, along with DuPlessis's Drafts, resemble The Cantos, even as they work to overturn Pound's most basic ideological assumptions and assertions.

What this does is to underscore the ideological situationality of forms, the way idioms pioneered by the modernists may be either radical or reactionary, depending on the political stance of the writer. The true heroes of the literary history DuPlessis gestures toward in *Blue Studios* are poets who consciously subvert conventional expectations. DuPlessis is at her best when considering the achievements and ideologies of particular writers, as in "Lorine Niedecker, the Anonymous: Gender, Class, Genre, and Resistances," where she analyzes Niedecker's subversive reinvention of the nursery rhyme and the folk ballad, or in "The Gendered Marvelous: Barbara Guest, Surrealism, and Feminist Reception," which considers Guest's reinterpretation of the relationship between painter and model, and of the surrealist movement in particular.

Most moving by far is DuPlessis's reading of George Oppen, "Uncannily in the Open': In Light of Oppen." Oppen was a member of the short-lived Objectivist movement of the early 1930s, but would abandon poetry for a quarter century to devote himself to leftist political organizing. When he returned to writing in the late 1950s, DuPlessis argues, he did so with no diminution of his egalitarian political commitments. Oppen was a major influence on DuPlessis's writing, in many ways her mentor (she has edited an excellent *Selected Letters* of Oppen's), and her reading of how his late work instantiates a new "epistemology" is striking indeed:

The strained, open, gnomic, and aphoristic line of his later poetry gives to him, but with a different ethics, a different epistemology, what surrealism gives to others: an investigatory tool to explore how the world may be put together differently by setting certain materials in combination. (201)

This "different epistemology," in DuPlessis's account, is a utopian project, an ongoing existential and social critique of the world in which we live and an attempt at imagining a better one. I find DuPlessis's juxtaposition of Oppen's verse to Benjamin's Arcades Project and Adorno's Aesthetic Theory both apt and suggestive, though I hankered for more detailed readings of Oppen's "gnomic and aphoristic" lines. While I think an extended reading of Oppen's poetry certainly bears out DuPlessis's description of his project, her all-too-brief analyses of passages from his poems—almost nods toward them—might leave a skeptical reader questioning whether her overall presentation of Oppen's work might not be merely a hopeful reconception of an exceedingly challenging and sometimes quite oblique body of writing.

DuPlessis's description of Oppen's poetics—"an investigatory tool to explore how the world may be put together differently by setting certain materials in juxtaposition"—may equally serve as a description of her own essayistic practice. It yields rich results in *Blue Studios*, whether she is considering the possibility of a feminist literary history ("Marble Paper: Toward a Feminist 'History of Poetry," in which Wordsworth's "The Solitary Reaper" is the primary object of analysis) or whether she is pondering the role of the muse figure in contemporary poetic manifestos by Allen Grossman and Charles Olson ("Manifests").

Once we have experienced the nonlinear progressions and exciting jumps of diction and register in DuPlessis's essays, more conventional academic writing may seem somewhat wan and bloodless. "Propounding Modernist Maleness: How Pound Managed a Muse"—a contextualizing reading of Pound's "Portrait d'une Femme" in light of the poem's "model" Florence Farr—is an excellent example of her illuminating work on the historical development of modernism. But it is also the least engaging piece in *Blue Studios*, largely because of its conformity to the impersonal strictures of academic writing. I don't hear DuPlessis in this one, and it's her voice—witty, grave, chatty, winkingly stuffy, punning, layered, and inherently *polyvocal*—that makes this collection the stunning success it is.

Postskeptical Criticism

Worldly Acts and Sentient Things: The Persistence of Agency from Stein to DeLillo

by Robert Chodat

Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2008. 254 pages

Stephen Schryer

For the past decade, much of the best work published in twentieth-century American studies has responded to a challenge posed by a 2002 article by John Guillory. Addressing Alan Sokal's 1996 hoax article in *Social Text*, Guillory argued that the resulting scandal highlighted the "spontaneous philosophy of the critics": the assumption that

an antirealist epistemology (alternatively expressed as antifoundationalism or relativism) is a requisite for any progressive politics and, conversely, that realism, foundationalism, or universalism underlie—at the level of the episteme, as it were—all that is regressive in our society. (476)

This politically inflected skepticism originated in the disciplinary shift that took place in the 1970s and 1980s, as critics reinvigorated literary studies through the discovery of French continental theory. In the course of the fierce disciplinary battles that followed, theory became institutionalized, and what began as a series of anticommonsensical provocations by the French philosophical avant–garde morphed into the new common sense of the US literary professoriate. Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, a significant number of Americanists have started to problematize this unargued skepticism. This work, best exemplified by recent texts by Kenneth Warren and Mark McGurl, has used twentieth–century American literature to develop a kind of self-reflexive disciplinary sociology. Its purpose is to defamiliarize the literary field, to render what is anticommonsensical about literary criticism visible once again.

Robert Chodat's remarkable Worldly Acts and Sentient Things goes one step further and shows what a postskeptical literary criticism might look like. The book is a study of questions of intention and agency in the work of four twentieth-century writers: Gertrude Stein, Saul Bellow, Ralph El-

lison, and Don DeLillo. Largely eschewing continental theory, it instead develops meticulous readings informed by the author's immersion in the Anglo American analytic and pragmatic tradition. The object of Chodat's critique is the anti-intentionalist bias in twentieth-century literature and literary theory—its tendency to "demythologize the self-directing I,' the monarchical transcendental consciousness purporting to lord over the contingencies of history or unconscious desire" (5). Chodat's response to this bias is twofold. First, he highlights alternative approaches to agency and intentionality available in the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein, Wilfrid Sellars, John Dewey, and W.V. O. Quine. These approaches begin from a perspective that Sellars refers to as the "manifest image": our folk psychological tendency to attribute agency to embodied persons acting in vaguely defined and constantly shifting social networks. Second, Chodat argues that in an important sense, agency never disappeared at all in twentieth-century literary culture. Rather, it became displaced from embodied persons onto a variety of sub- and suprapersonal entities. Worldly Acts and Sentient Things works through this logic of displacement and shows how it depends on the folk psychology that it tries to circumvent.

Chodat divides his book into two parts, each of which deals with a distinct kind of disembodied agent prevalent in modern and postmodern fiction. Part 1 discusses writers' tendency to attribute agency to internal presences distinct from the embodied person. Gertrude Stein is the figure who best exemplifies the aesthetic that results. In her experimental prose poetry, Stein adopts an extreme nominalist stance, one that leads her to try to register the particularity and immediacy of experience. This stance contributes to the difficulty of her work, much of which fractures grammatical sense and traces idiosyncratic associations. According to Chodat, this aesthetic implies a particular model of selfhood—one that she shares with her mentor, William James. Namely, it implies that we are inhabited by an experiencing self distinct from our public person, to the extent that "its speech is radically unlike our own" (44). Hence Stein's poetry enacts a private, internal language. This conception of agency is paradoxical; as Chodat points out, in order to minimally defend Stein against the charge that she is a nonsense poet, her critics inevitably read her work in light of her public self. Nevertheless, this conception has gained a prominent foothold in the work of psychoanalysts, phenomenologists, language poets, and even some cognitive scientists.

Against Stein's private prose poetry, Chodat juxtaposes the public-

minded fiction of Saul Bellow, whom he claims enacts Sellars's and the later Wittgenstein's account of embodied agency. Chodat focuses on Henderson the Rain King (1959), especially the novel's central dialogue between Henderson and King Dahfu, the Wariri philosopher prince whom Henderson meets while exploring Africa. In writing the novel—a response to the 1950s counterculture—Bellow envisaged Dahfu as a parody of psychologist Wilhelm Reich. Chodat in turn reads Reich's post-Freudian psychoanalysis as another version of the internalist conception of agency implicit in Stein's aesthetic—the notion that there is a hidden, desiring agent within us at odds with the customs of the society we live in. By contrast, Henderson the Rain King, like Bellow's other novels, affirms the necessity of these customs, even as it registers their incompleteness and fragility. Bellow's realism, Chodat claims, derives from his sensitivity to the "languages, concepts, beliefs, and social practices by which we moderns typically, if also provisionally, make sense of the world" (114).

In part 2, Chodat turns from the subpersonal to the suprapersonal, exploring writers' and social theorists' tendency to locate agency outside of the person, in societies, cultures, and institutions. Don DeLillo here fulfills the same function as Stein in part 1; his work is an exemplar of suprapersonal agency at its most extreme. In particular, Chodat is interested in DeLillo's claim that his magnum opus, Underworld (1992), is a holistic representation of the "deep mind of the culture" (205), which DeLillo conceives of as a single intentional system inaccessible to his various characters. This conception is responsible for the structural fragmentation of DeLillo's text-its division into discrete narrative fragments that can only be unified when read as the story of the culture as a whole. As in the case of Stein's internalism, Chodat argues that this conception is dependent on the embodied model of agency that it eschews: "Aren't the pre-eminent entities of DeLillo's fiction—cultures, systems, connections, history manifest only through finite events occurring within finite contexts, and only to finite cognitive beings?" (221). The "deep mind of the culture" is always the contingent construct of embodied persons, and Chodat identifies narrative moments in Underworld that work against DeLillo's desire to hypostasize disembodied systems.

As in the case of part 1, Chodat also counters DeLillo with a more conventional novelist who remains skeptical of any attempt to displace the personal by the suprapersonal—namely, Ralph Ellison. *Invisible Man* (1952), Chodat argues, is a sourcebook of suprapersonal presences of the

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kind invoked in *Underworld*. In Ellison's case, these presences take the form of the various ideologies that govern the groups and institutions through which the unnamed narrator passes; all of them "are held together by a set of keywords organizing the field of inferential connections in a given vocabulary and thus providing the world with a particular 'shape'" (129). In contrast to *Underworld*, the point of Ellison's novel is to highlight the insufficiency of these collectivist entities insofar as they render specific individuals invisible. At the heart of the novel is the narrator's search for an embodied identity apart from the narrowly circumscribed roles available to African Americans in midcentury America.

As this brief synopsis implies, Worldly Acts and Sentient Things offers a spirited defense of a particular novelistic aesthetic, one at odds with that espoused by most critics of twentieth-century literature. Of course, Chodat is not merely interested in chastising Stein and DeLillo for their departures from the embodied concept of agency developed by Wittgenstein, Sellars, and other Anglo American philosophers. Both Gertrude Stein and Don DeLillo are valuable insofar as they are "expressive of a great uncertainty about how to describe both ourselves and our world" (234) that runs throughout twentieth-century literary, philosophical, and scientific thought. This uncertainty conforms to important features of contemporary social life. As Chodat notes with regard to DeLillo, "there are social dynamics whose staggering complexity makes them seem in some sense self-subsistent and self-generating" (194); Underworld is successful insofar as it evokes this sense. Moreover, much of the complexity of Stein and DeLillo's work emerges when they work against their own suband suprapersonal notions of agency, returning embodied persons to the center of literary representation. Nevertheless, Chodat clearly favors the mid-twentieth-century fiction of Saul Bellow and Ralph Ellison, which embodies an alternative to the respective excesses of Stein's modernism and DeLillo's postmodernism. In spite of their occasional flights of fantasy (more evident in Ellison than in Bellow), both writers remain committed to the traditional bourgeois novel. This novelistic tradition confronts an increasingly secularized universe and asks "what achieving a good life would possibly mean, and how it could be identified amidst a swirl of local actions, non-intentional physical events, and specific circumstances" (220). This is a type of novel, Chodat argues, that is increasingly difficult to write in the twentieth century. Nevertheless, he is most interested in novelists who try to do so, who chronicle their characters' struggle to

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"build their lives into some kind of more or less coherent unity" (117) without succumbing to the belief that they are drowning in an unmediated flux of experience or being absorbed within broader systems.

If there is any area where Chodat could have pushed this argument further, it is in his attempt to mediate between this novelistic tradition and sociology in part 2. Sociology is crucial for Chodat, insofar as it is the modern discipline most responsible for our tendency to displace agency from persons onto societies and institutions. DeLillo is therefore a sociological writer par excellence, whereas Ellison engaged in a lifelong polemic against all forms of sociological explanation. Chodat's key example of sociology's emphasis on the suprapersonal is Niklas Luhmann's social systems theory, which describes the different subsystems of modern societies (the economic system, the legal system, the educational system, etc.) as self-reproducing (autopoeitic) entities akin to living organisms. Indeed, Luhmann asks us to imagine these systems as entirely distinct from the persons who sustain them: the legal system, for example, creates and sustains distinctions between legality and illegality independently of the particular judges, lawyers, victims, and defendants in the courtroom. At most, embodied persons occupy the environment of a social system, perturbing it from without and forcing it to adapt to new circumstances. Luhmann's sociology, however, is an extreme case. Most sociological theorists do think of social systems in terms that more closely approximate the common-sense notion of agency implicit in the manifest image of our folk psychology and folk physics. Indeed, the problem of negotiating between the micro- and macrosocial—between a sociology attuned to embodied agency and one attuned to social structure—has been the central problem of sociological theory since the 1960s. Moreover, as the Marxist critical-realist tradition stemming from Georg Lukacs shows, the bourgeois novelistic tradition that Chodat extols often negotiates this micro-/macrosocial divide in similar ways. Luhmann, in other words, is the straw man of Chodat's study; he could have developed a more subtle account of suprapersonal agency had he discussed either Anthony Giddens or Pierre Bourdieu.

Overall, however, Worldly Acts and Sentient Things is a provocative, nuanced, and challenging study that breaks new ground in Americanist literary scholarship. Chodat's immersion in Anglo American philosophy allows him to shed new light on both the canonical texts that he reads and the critical assumptions that he dismantles. At their best, Chodat's readings

provoke the same experience that Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations do: they remind us of the complexity latent in the everyday. Ultimately, his book's paradoxical effect is to disrupt our disciplinary common sense—by confronting us with an alternative common sense that we have forgotten.

Note

1. See especially Warren's So Black and Blue and McGurl's The Novel Art and WUNUKUI Kangri University "The Program Era."

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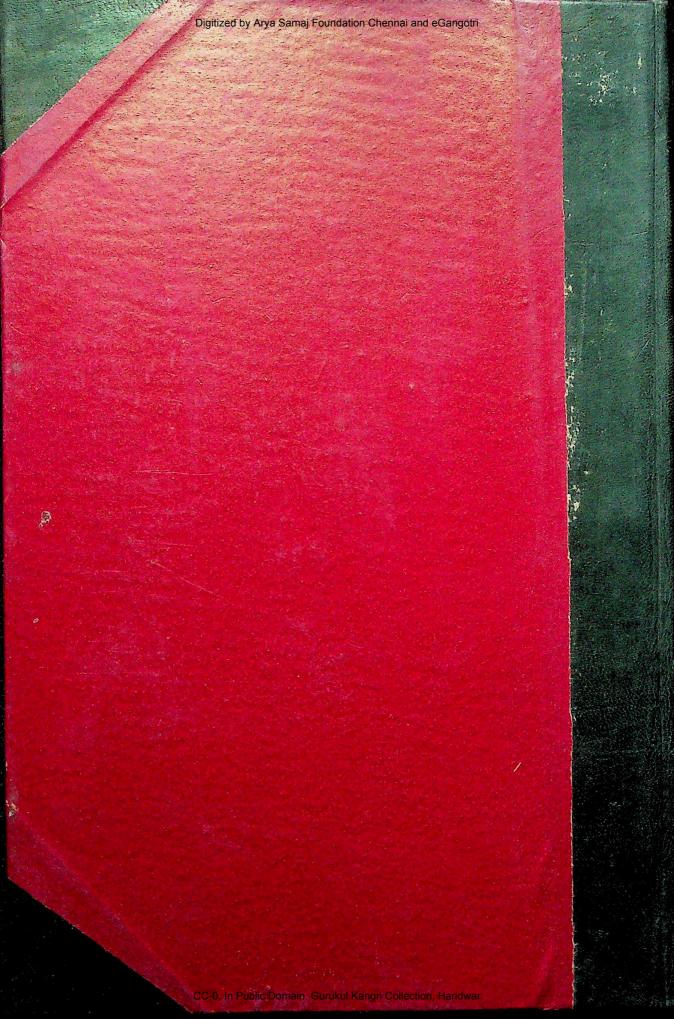
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